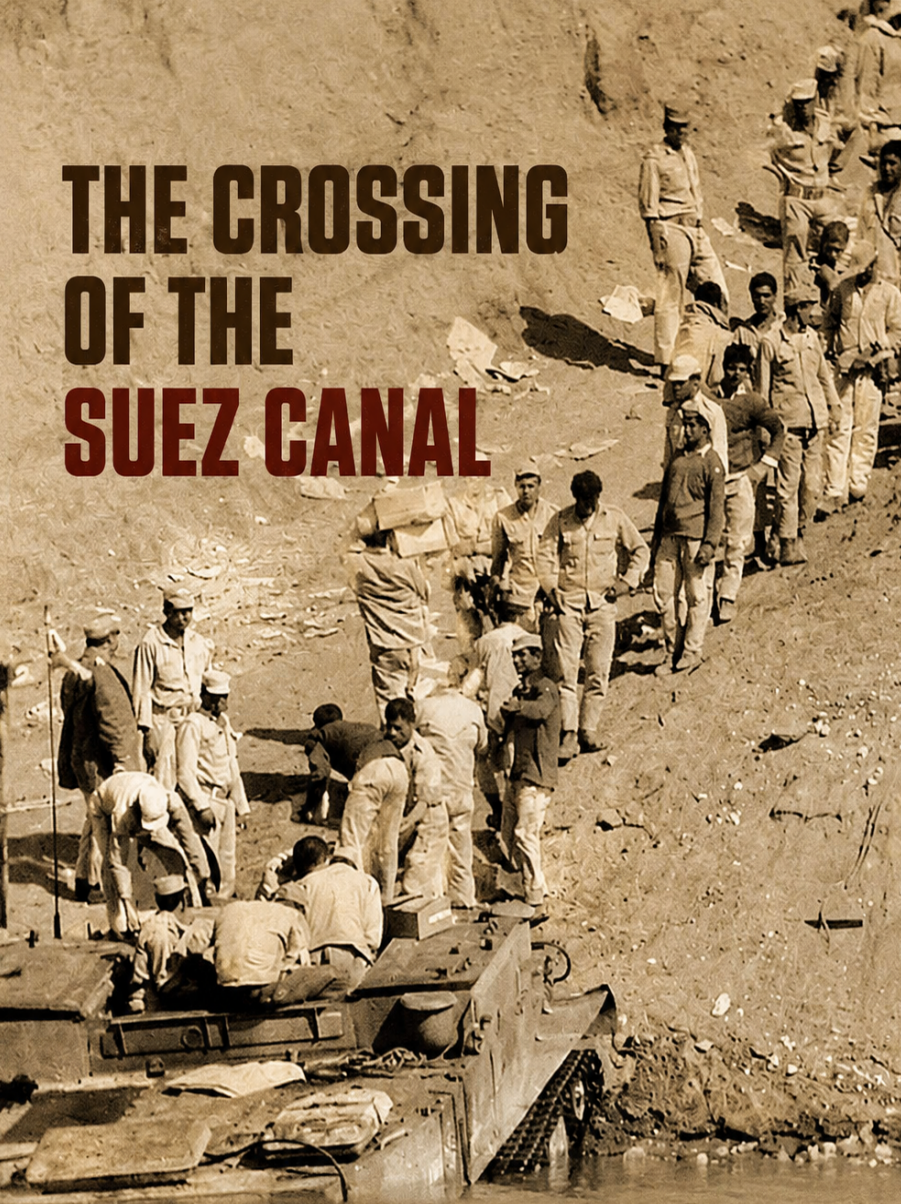
THE CROSSING OF THE SUEZ CANAL



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Lt. General Saad el Shazly

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THE CROSSING OF THE SUEZ

Introduction

This is a military memoir: my record as Chief of Staff of the Egyptian Armed Forces during the Arab-Israeli War of October 1973. It is to the best of my knowledge unique, being the only memoir of its kind by a contemporary Arab commander. I have written it with reluctance, with sorrow and with anger. When I say that my anger is directed primarily at the man who is the President of Egypt, it will be understood why I, after a lifetime as a soldier serving my country and my people, was reluctant to take up the pen and felt sorrow that in the end it became an inescapable duty.

So many books have been written about the 1973 conflict. Why then are so many facts still hidden? Why is so much of what has been written distorted in fact or in interpretation? One reason, of course, is ignorance on the part of the writers. But there is a deeper cause. There has been, as I shall demonstrate, a deliberate campaign to hide what really happened in that war. Why, as

a first example, do the following questions still wait for answers?

ONE: Why did the Egyptian Armed Forces, after their successful crossing of the Suez Canal, not develop their offensive eastward and immediately capture the Sinai passes?

TWO: Is the persistent rumor true that the Egyptian high command had expected an enemy penetration westward across the canal in the area of Deversoir—precisely where the enemy did come—and had prepared a plan to crush it? I now testify that this was so. Why did the Egyptians then not carry out their pre-planned counter-attack?

THREE: Why did the Egyptian Armed Forces instead allow the westward penetration to develop day by day? The answer, as I shall show, is that our plans to deal with it were consistently vetoed by the politicians: specifically, by President Anwar Sadat and his Minister of War, General Ahmed Ismail Ali.

FOUR: Who was responsible for the encirclement of the Egyptian Third Army? Again, was it the soldiers or the politicians?

FIVE: How far did that encirclement affect the outcome of the war, not merely militarily but politically, and not merely the outcome for Egypt but for the Arab world as a whole?

* * *

I was Chief of Staff of the Egyptian Armed Forces for more than two years before the war, right through the war, and until December 12, 1973. In other words, I knew the answers, though I never intended to publish them. But through 1974 and 1975, as I sat as Ambassador

first in London and then in Lisbon, my dismay at what I read about the war grew. Lies from our enemies I had expected. But lies from our own leadership?

There was a personal element, of course. The main endeavor of those in Cairo now professing to tell inside stories about the war seemed to be to denigrate the role I had played as Chief of Staff. For myself, I did not mind; I rest content upon the judgment of my peers. What dismayed and then angered me was that this personal campaign led inexorably to wholesale distortion of the achievements of the armed forces as a group. The long and careful crafting of our offensive plan over several years was now brushed aside. The painful preparation and devoted training for the canal crossing were passed over superficially. The heroic details of the crossing itself were ignored in a chorus of sycophancy proclaiming that all effort resulted from the leadership of one man. And when these informed accounts came to deal with the Israeli penetration on the Egyptian side of the canal, they sank to straightforward lies. No mention of how I clashed with the President on October 16 over the way to deal with it. No mention of how our plans were then vetoed day after day by the President or his Minister of War. Instead, to explain away this disaster, the President and his acolytes tried to heap all the blame upon me—and, by swift extension, upon the gallant men whom I had the honor to lead.

It was to rehabilitate them that, in October 1976, after three years of misrepresentation that I decided to write this memoir. I was aided in the task by official papers which remain in my possession. A year later, in October 1977, my first rough draft was done.

I hesitated. Publication, I knew, would bring a confrontation with President Sadat that I still did not seek. I also wished to do nothing that might harm a genuine peace-making process. So, from Lisbon I watched with sadness, with patience and now with preparedness. The further actions of the President confirmed my fears. In November 1977, he made that ill-conceived visit to Israel, giving much and gaining nothing. In April 1978, he achieved the dubious distinction of becoming the first modern head of state to publish his memoirs while still in office; even by the relaxed standards of such works, his are markedly self-serving. Every achievement of Egypt has been his personal success, it seems; every failure was the fault of others. Finally, in May 1978, Egypt saw the logical culmination of such egotism, when Sadat launched oppressive measures against his political opponents as the only way left to silence the mounting criticism of his policy. I decided it was time to speak out. On June 19, 1978, I launched my second surprise attack . . . I spoke out against Sadat, quit my post, and since then have not seen the soil of Egypt.

* * *

This memoir I dedicate to the soldiers and officers of the Egyptian Armed Forces. It is their story; it tells, at last, the truth about their triumph. I am proud of every single day I spent as their Chief of Staff. I am proud that during my tenure the first successful Arab offensive against Israel was planned and executed.

I pay tribute to every officer and man who took part in it and in doing so restored the pride of the Egyptian soldier. They are the witnesses to the truth of what I write. I have documents to prove every word. But the

Egyptian soldier alone knows the whole truth—some parts known by thousands, some by hundreds, some aspects shared by a close handful. The only people who will deny this truth are those who have sold themselves, in some cases literally, to President Sadat; and for them I care nothing.

May God help and guide us to the right way and give us the courage to say the truth, whatever may be the consequences.

General Saad el Shazly
Chief of Staff of the
Egyptian Armed Forces
during the Arab-Israeli War,
October 1973

Prologue: The Barrier

Consider the obstacle. To a modern army, rivers and canals present little challenge. Amphibious tanks and armored personnel carriers spearhead the assault and establish a bridgehead on the far bank. Mobile, prefabricated bridge sections are brought up, unloaded, locked together and swung into place within minutes. By the time the main body of the army arrives, the crossing is ready.

But the Suez Canal was unique. Unique in the difficulties its construction presented to an amphibious assault force. Unique in the scale of defenses the enemy had erected on top of those natural obstacles. It was only 195-220 yards wide. But to all who saw it, the Suez Canal seemed an impassable barrier.

The first obstacle stemmed from the fact that the canal is an artificial waterway through sand, and sand erodes. To prevent it, the canal banks have been lined with concrete walls rising above the water line and dropping steeply to the canal bed. The canal has a tidal rise and

fall. At high tide the water flows a yard below the top of the concrete wall, at low water two yards, and on the southern stretch, three yards below. Amphibious vehicles cannot leap, labrador like, from banks a yard or more high, at least not without serious risk. Even if they did, how could they climb out the other side?

The second obstacle was a gigantic sand dune the enemy had raised along the length of the eastern bank. For six years, Israeli bulldozers had laboriously piled the sand ever higher—their most sustained efforts coming, naturally, at likely crossing points. There the barrier towered 60 feet high and as thick at its base. (The slopes of the bank rose at 45-65 degrees depending on the stability of the sand.) The barrier ran so close to the canal that its western face, which would confront our assault, merged with the steeper gradient of the concrete banking.

Above this formidable barrier rose the third obstacle: the 35 forts of the Bar-Lev line. Heavily dug in, their shelters are safe against anything less than a 1,000 pound bomb, with firing positions giving all-round cover. Each fort is self-contained and equipped to hold out under siege for a week, protected by minefields and barbed wire. On the average, there is one fort every three miles; but at likely crossing points they are clustered only 1,000 yards apart. To man all 35 took only an infantry brigade. To reinforce them, Israel had allotted three armored brigades: 360 tanks. The tanks would take up firing positions every hundred yards between the forts. Two roads ran the length of the sand barrier, one along its crest, the other just behind it. Hidden from our view, the enemy could maneuver their armor to reinforce any sudden weak point. If the enemy were alerted long enough

before the assault to get the tanks to the barrier, the entire front would be swept by machineguns and anti-tank fire. If our men did brave all that and cross into Sinai, how rapidly they could then expect counter-attacks would also depend on the warning we gave the enemy. Depending on the distribution of their armor behind the canal, we reckoned the enemy might be able to mount counter-attacks of tank company and tank battalion strength within 15-30 minutes, and in the worst case at armored brigade strength within two hours of the start of our assault.

But how could we even get across the water? The fourth barrier was a secret one. Deep inside the sand rampart the enemy had embedded reservoirs filled with inflammable liquid, their outlets controlled from the nearest forts. In minutes, the liquid could gush into the canal, turning its surface into an inferno.

That was the obstacle: the canal and the enemy defenses. The enemy had shown the obstacle to visiting military experts from all over the world. All had declared it to be insurmountable. Our task was to surmount it.

Chapter One: Surviving

The will was always there. Even during the dark time after our defeat in 1967, we sustained morale and spurred reconstruction by looking to the day when we would launch an offensive, either to destroy the enemy while they occupied our territory or to force them to withdraw from it. We never dreamed we would have to wait more than six long years.

One reason why we did was that, for two of those six years, we were already at war with Israel: the so-called War of Attrition. It rarely hit the international headlines. But it cost us thousands of lives and tens of millions of pounds. It is not my purpose to recount the history of that war; a notional truce had been in force for almost a year before I became Chief of Staff. But its bitter lessons, along with those of 1967, so influenced our planning of the October assault that I need to outline at least the main events.

The rebuilding of our armed forces began with Soviet

help, within weeks of our defeat in June 1967. By September 1968 our ground forces, at least, were sufficiently recovered to challenge the enemy encamped along the east bank of our canal. The War of Attrition began. Militarily, our aim was to raise the morale of an army battered by a stunning defeat and to inflict casualties upon an enemy always sensitive to losses. Our plan was to shell enemy forward positions along the east bank, and to send commandos deep into occupied Sinai to ambush enemy tanks and trucks by night.

Initially, our barrage and our raids achieved good results. But the enemy retaliated by dropping helicopter-borne units deep into Egypt to blow up vital targets: the power station of Nag Hamadi in Upper Egypt was one; vital links in our irrigation system were others. We were forced to call off our attacks. After five months, however, the need to do something—our need to symbolize our refusal to remain defeated forever—forced us to reopen our efforts in late spring 1969. The enemy responded more fiercely than ever. In July 1969, the Israeli Air Force was committed to the battle.

Swiftly, Israeli aircraft destroyed our air defense system in the northern sector, opening a breach between Ismailia and Port Said, a corridor for enemy aircraft to penetrate deep into the Nile Delta. Nor did we have to wait long to learn what this air superiority would now permit.

On September 9, 1969, a sea-borne force of ten tanks and several tracked vehicles crossed the Gulf of Suez, landing not far from our port of Zafarana. In a raid lasting almost a whole day, they destroyed defense installations, air observation posts, and whatever vehicles happened to be on the coast road. Zafarana was scarcely a sensitive target. Our troops there were scattered, their

task, routine observation rather than the repelling of enemy tanks, especially as they had only small arms and anti-tank guns with a range of no more than 500 yards. From almost 2,000 yards the enemy tanks picked them off. The Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces was promptly dismissed by President Nasser. But the failure ran deeper than an individual. The significance of the raid, apart from its propaganda value to the enemy, was that the coast-to-coast round trip took about 12 hours, during which enemy air superiority was such that no Egyptian aircraft or vessel came to challenge.

As the enemy intensified air strikes into the depths of our country, the calamity reached its climax. Our air defenses collapsed and the enemy began to hit even civilian targets with impunity—industrial centers, factories, even a children's school. Our ground forces were reduced to defending with World War Two anti-aircraft guns. In December 1969, presumably to demonstrate absolute superiority, the enemy landed on our Red Sea coast, raided an isolated radar station, dismantled the equipment, loaded it into a helicopter brought for the purpose and flew the prize back to Israel.

In January 1970, President Nasser went secretly to Moscow and asked the Soviet Union to take a direct hand in our air defense. The Soviets agreed. Through February and March, in great secrecy, their men and equipment began to arrive: 80 MIG-21 interceptors; 27 battalions of surface-to-air missiles (SAMs); banks of electronic equipment to counter that carried aboard the enemy intruders; four MIG-25 high-altitude reconnaissance aircraft and the crews to man them. In all, two Soviet air force brigades and an air defense division. The Soviet role was purely defensive, the protection of

our heartland. The Soviet presence eased the defense burden on our air force and enabled us to concentrate on rebuilding air strength. The Soviets took responsibility for certain interior areas only, while Egypt defended the rest, including the strip running ten miles west of the canal and the Gulf of Suez.

By April the Soviet equipment was fully operational; on April 18, Russians in Egypt became a secret no longer. The Soviet pilots made their first contact with Israeli intruders and pursued them into Sinai, chattering the while in Russian, which was promptly monitored by Israeli and American listening stations. Israeli penetration raids ceased. The first phase had ended. Between January 1, 1970 and April 18, the enemy air force had flown 3,300 sorties and dropped 8,000 tons of munitions on our territory.

At last our surviving air defense units could reorganize and build. First priority was to assert themselves along that ten-mile strip west of the canal which remained Egypt's own responsibility. The priority went beyond questions of national pride. Preparations to cross the canal would focus on this strip; assault forces would concentrate there. That was why the strip was so important. In the last days of June 1970, under cover of night, our reconstituted air defense units leapfrogged their SAMs forward into the strip. The second phase had begun.

Our reward soon came. On June 30, 1970, our SAMs shot down two enemy F-4 raiders. Through the first week of July ten enemy intruders fell, seven on our territory. The Egyptian *fellah* promptly honored the time with a special name in his calendar: "The week of the falling of enemy aircraft" it was baptized. The truth was that, welcome as the victory was in signalling the rebirth

of our air defense service, it had ushered in the era of missile-versus-aircraft. And it was already clear that victory in any such conflict would go to whoever happened to have the more sophisticated electronic detection, jamming and counter-jamming devices.

On that uneasy basis, by the end of July 1970 both sides had agreed to a ceasefire on the Suez front. It was, for the moment, a stand-off. The work of preparing a new assault could proceed. The foundation of that had to be the reconstruction of our ground forces.

Chapter Two: Planning

Reconstruction began as it must: at the top. From autumn 1968 the General Headquarters (GHQ) of the Egyptian Armed Forces began annual strategic exercises. Their purpose was to retrain GHQ and the service headquarters subordinate to it—Air Force HQ, Air Defense HQ, Naval HQ, the headquarters of the field armies, of the special forces, of the Red Sea and other military districts, and so on—under conditions approaching as closely as possible an expected war environment. (The exercises lasted a week; the Minister of War was normally director; the President might sometimes attend part of them.) In 1968-69 I took part as Special Forces Commander, in 1970 as Commander of the Red Sea Military District, and in 1971 and 1972 as Chief of Staff. The 1973 strategic exercise was somewhat overtaken. We had announced it would start on October 1 and last the usual seven days. It was part of our deception plan.

The exercises were in one sense unreal. It was clearly

impossible in 1968 to attack an enemy superior in everything. So the exercises deliberately presumed that we had far more by way of men and material than the grim reality. That was sensible. Plans and decisions of commanders in the exercises might as a consequence bear little relation to existing conditions; but they would become steadily more relevant as our resources grew. Our offensive planning for 1973 began, in other words, as early as 1968; but it ran far ahead of our offensive capabilities. Over the next four years our capabilities steadily grew while our planning became more realistic. The gulf between them, enormous in 1968, shrank with each year's exercise until, in October 1973 when exercise became reality, planning and capability were one.

Inevitably though, shortages in those early days did not affect planning. The truth is that when I became Chief of Staff on May 16, 1971, we had no real offensive plan. There was a defensive plan code-named Operation 200 and a more aggressive one called Granite. But although Granite incorporated raids into Sinai, it too fell far short of being a true offensive plan. My task, clearly, was to create one.

To outline it briefly, I began my time as Chief of Staff, necessarily with an intensive study of our enemy's forces and capabilities in relation to ours. My conclusions were discouraging. To understand them, it is necessary to examine in turn, as I did, the state of our services.

* * *

AIR FORCE: Our weakest arm. In an offensive, we ought to be able to call on it for four tasks. (1) air cover for our ground forces moving through the exposed terrain of Sinai; (2) close-support strikes against enemy targets; (3) rapid and accurate reconnaissance of the

enemy's battle formations—a particularly important task in open-country warfare; and finally, the disruption of the enemy's command, communications, supply and reinforcement patterns by air strikes far into his rear. Our air force could offer us very little.

Twice, it had been destroyed on the ground: by the British and French in 1956, and by the Israelis in 1967. That had cost us few pilots, but a near-total destruction of morale. At appalling cost in concrete and the labor of our engineers corps, we were now reducing the risk of a repeat debacle by building 500 concrete shelters for our aircraft. On 20 major airfields, all services—operations room, pilots' quarters, hospitals, maintenance—were being buried in concrete warrens underground. And to further deter a surprise attack, most of our main bases were now adequately ringed by SAMs.

But in the air our pilots still depended on their own skills and whatever they could coax from their machines; and in their many encounters since 1967 our men had frankly not matched the enemy's. Was the problem lack of skill or inferior aircraft? Our pilots were always blaming the machines; the Soviets blamed our pilots. I saw it as a combination of both.

We had, to start with, fewer pilots than the enemy; those we had were far less experienced. Most of ours had less than 1,000 hours flying time; most of their's had logged more than 2,000 hours. Our pilots needed intensive training; yet even relatively raw ones had to bear the burden of the War of Attrition. By 1970 pilot exhaustion had pushed training accidents to an alarming rate. We eased off the training pressure. But that merely meant training would take longer.

The enemy had even more in their favor. Air battles

tended to be at a time and place of their choosing. Their aircraft would penetrate our air space, our pilots would go up to intercept. But the enemy, we knew, had groomed about 50 crews—the cream of the crop—to fly these penetration raids. Their combat tactics were prearranged. Our pilots were just the duty roster. Without time to concert plans, they would scramble and be briefed while climbing. (And our air controllers, like any group, were of varying skill: some excellent, others frankly poor.) Small wonder that sometimes our pilots were ambushed in the air or even, in less forgivable instances, lured into long chases which left them without fuel far from base. Frequently, our pilots would swear they had shot down one or more of the enemy. But, until October 1973, those kills somehow never fell on Egyptian-held soil.

Not that our pilots were wholly inaccurate in blaming their equipment. Shortages were not the problem: in 1971 we had more MIG-21s than we could fly. But their short range and limited payload ate into the weaponry and electronics they could carry. The enemy aircraft were more sophisticated, fitted with later air-to-air and air-to-surface missiles and with far heavier electronics. Our pilots, however gallant, faced impossible odds. In effect, the enemy air force was ten years ahead of ours.

AIR DEFENSE: An effective air defense needs four integrated elements: (1) an ability to detect and monitor intruders approaching from a distance; (2) interceptors superior in range, speed and manueverability; (3) a network of SAMs; and (4) electronics. The intruders will carry devices to blind the defender's detection gear and disrupt their SAMs and air-to-air missiles. Air defense needs the electronic means to counter that.

Without any one of those elements, an air defense is vulnerable. Yet to create such a system is enormously expensive, in both money and skills. I discovered, as Chief of Staff, that *half* the engineers in Egypt were in the armed forces, most of them working on our air defenses and the associated electronics, although not necessarily manning the equipment. Construction of hundreds of new SAM sites begun as part of the air defense reorganization following the arrival of the Soviets, was well advanced by the end of 1970 but still took 1971 and 1972 to complete.

By mid-1971, however, as I reviewed our capabilities, our air defense system was clearly on the way to adequacy. The Russians were operating about 30 percent of our MIG-21s, 20 percent of our SAMs and most of the electronics. We, meanwhile, were taking advantage of their help (and the respite from attack their presence assured us) to rebuild and retrain our own air defense corps. And now we were working with better equipment. In the opening phase of the War of Attrition, our SAMs—the type known in the West as SAM-2s—had severe limitations: low altitude intruders evaded them. The SAM-3s the Soviets brought with them in 1970 helped to increase our capabilities.

But my conclusion was that, while our air defense system was approaching adequacy, it was mainly defensive. That sounds obvious. My point was that our SAMs were not mobile on trucks or tracked vehicles; their cumbersome radar and electronics were easy prey to enemy air strikes if spotted on the move, anywhere; they were safe only underground. For static defense, they might prove adequate (though we still did not have SAM batteries to protect every target), but they could provide

no air cover for an offensive operation, especially over the open landscape of Sinai.

LAND FORCES: We had about 800,000 men under arms. Yet, contrary to persistent international propaganda by the enemy, we had no real advantage in front line forces. No less than 58 percent of our vast total were not field troops.

The main reason for the imbalance was enemy air superiority. We had to anticipate that in a future conflict tactics of the War of Attrition would be repeated and helicopter-borne raids sent deep into Egypt. That posed maximum problems to the defense: hundreds of isolated bridges over the Nile and its tributaries; an intricate and vulnerable irrigation system on which our agriculture depends; water lines spanning hundreds of miles of desert with pumping stations and reservoirs on route; telephone system strung over like distances; petrol lines; plus the usual strategic targets such as railways, roads, electricity plants, government buildings and the like.

The barest reserves to cover these, plus our Red Sea coastline, consumed hundreds of thousands of men. (Another drain on manpower was the very expansion of the armed forces. Our military schools and training centers were working overtime. Extra officers and men—good ones too—had to be drafted to their staffs.) The upshot was that the ground forces we could actually allot to an assault across the canal would give us no more than parity with the enemy. We did have slight superiority in artillery; but the enemy would be sheltered in the underground fortresses of the Bar-Lev line which, we knew, successive layers of earth and concrete had secured against every shell we possessed. On top of that, the Suez Canal itself, plus the obstacles which the Israelis

had lined upon its banks, presented what most military experts regarded as an impregnable obstacle.

Once into the desert beyond, our ground forces would face another hazard. Most would have to travel in soft-skinned vehicles—trucks rather than armored personnel carriers—and most of those had little or no cross-country capability. 1956 and 1967 had demonstrated that, operating in the desert against an enemy with air superiority, these were a menace. They had to stick to roads or hard tracks. Hit one and not only was the road blocked by that disabled vehicle. All behind would clog into a traffic jam miles long, a serious enough problem even without the inevitable further air strikes.

NAVY: Our naval arm alone was stronger than the enemy's. But our weakness in the air swamped even them.

Our navy had suffered least of the services in 1967; and its morale and standing had been powerfully boosted when, only four months later, it sank the Israeli destroyer *Eilat*, the vessel used to patrol east of Port Said, on occasion coming within six-and-a-half miles of the port. Finally, GHQ authorized a squadron of our Soviet-built KOMAR missile-boats to sink the *Eilat* next time it violated our 12-mile limit. On October 21, 1967, the *Eilat*, on its usual patrol, was allowed to approach within nine miles. Then the first sea-to-sea missile (SSM) ever fired in combat was launched. A second followed. The *Eilat* sank rapidly.

The world's navies had studied the event, none more than Israel's. The enemy had concluded that its main naval striking power should henceforth be fast-attack boats equipped with SSMs and torpedoes. They bought 12 SAAR class vessels from France, and started to build their own RESHEF class in Haifa shipyards at the rate of

two per year. (The first was launched on February 19, 1973.) Simultaneously, they designed an even lighter class, the DABUR. Both RESHEF and SAAR carry SSMs made in Israel under the name GABRIEL. The RESHEF class, 415 tons, carries seven GABRIELS, has a range of 1,500 miles, a top speed of 32 knots and a crew of 45. The DABUR, by contrast, is only 35 tons with a crew of six. It can mount torpedo tubes or machineguns; and a tank transporter can carry it overland from the Mediterranean to the Red Sea. (We reckoned the enemy had built 20 of the DABUR type before the October war.)

Despite this change of emphasis, the Israelis appreciated that their navy could still not challenge ours without the support of air power. Through the War of Attrition their response, a logical one, was to unleash their air force against our navy. The enemy would cruise the Gulf of Suez raiding our shipping, while our vessels, far heavier, were unable to challenge without calling upon themselves devastating air strikes. Even in port our navy was vulnerable. Our limited air defenses were allotted to our forces along the Suez front, and to the protection of our major cities and factories. Our Red Sea naval berths were naked to enemy strikes.

Small wonder that our navy, far stronger than the enemy's was all but neutralized. Nor is it surprising that since 1967 GHQ should have abandoned the idea of developing and modernizing our navy until we could provide air cover for it.

* * *

On those bleak considerations, I reached my first conclusion as Chief of Staff. It was impossible for us to launch a large-scale offensive to destroy the enemy concentrations in Sinai or to force enemy withdrawal

from Sinai and the Gaza Strip. All that our capabilities would permit was a *limited* attack. We could aim to cross the canal, destroy the Bar-Lev line and then take up a defensive posture. Any further, more aggressive moves would then need different equipment, different training, and a lot more preparation.

Four main factors drove me to that conclusion. The first was the weakness of our air force—a weakness so fundamental that, throughout my planning, I was anxious not to bring our air force into direct conflict with the enemy's. From the start, I adopted two main principles. First, to avoid chance air encounters. Second, to use our air force for sudden ground-attack strikes where enemy air cover was least likely. Primarily, I wanted the enemy's ground forces and ground targets to taste the *psychological* impact of our air force, while at the same time I wanted to preserve it from air combat. I was convinced that unless we deployed the air force in a cautious and calculated way, we would merely lose it for the third time, this time in the air.

The second factor leading me to conclude that only a limited operation was possible was the offensive limitations of our SAMs. In the later stages of the War of Attrition, our SAM emplacements had proven their effectiveness. Israeli pilots had been at pains to avoid them. Where they had passed within range, our SAMs had destroyed them. I was convinced that, even to repel our assault, the enemy pilots would still be cautious in braving the SAMs—and that when they did, we could exact a price. The point we could not forget was that our SAMs were static.

From 1956 and 1967 we had bitter knowledge of how ground troops exposed without effective air cover could

be routed. From the War of Attrition, by contrast, we had learned how ineffective air attacks were against well-entrenched troops. Logically, any advance by our troops east of the canal would need the support of an air defense based on SAMs. With enough preparation, my judgment was that we could cross the canal and advance east some six to eight miles while remaining under the SAM umbrella which we could deploy right on the west bank of the canal in quickly prepared field sites during the course of the battle. But at that line we would have to halt, entrench our troops and reorganize our air defense. To send ground forces rolling beyond that, without mobile SAMs to give advancing air cover, would be to court disaster.

The third factor in my calculations was the need to force the enemy to fight under unfavorable conditions. Israel, with its three million inhabitants, mobilizes in time of war more than a fifth of its population. It cannot sustain that for long without damaging its economy and crippling its service industries. The Israelis, in consequence, have always had two priorities. The first has been to avoid casualties. Loss of equipment, however sophisticated or costly, leaves them unmoved; their backers have always hastened to supply more. But the loss of a single soldier wounds them. Their second priority is to fight a *blitzkrieg* campaign; a conflict prolonged for months is anathema to them. It followed that if, having crossed the canal, we could consolidate our positions six to eight miles to the east, perhaps slightly more, we could compel the harshest of choices. The enemy would have to assault *our* positions, giving us the chance to inflict heavy losses on them from air and ground attack. We

could prolong the conflict at will, at minimum cost to ourselves.

My fourth and final factor was the simplest. To learn war, fight war. I had been in five wars and I was convinced that no peace-time exercise, however realistic, generates in troops the psychological effects of war: that blend of terror and courage, caution and gallant recklessness which fuels soldiers on the battlefield. To train our officers and men for the big war that had to come, we needed first a small war, a limited operation to give the battle experience most of our soldiers lacked. Moreover, there was a good chance such an operation could succeed; and that would go a long way to restoring the morale of armed forces beaten three times in less than 25 years. That reason alone seemed to me to dictate that our first operation should be a calculated risk rather than a quixotic gamble.

Operation 41 and The High Minarets

By the first days of July 1971, less than two months after my assignment as Chief of Staff, I was in a position to put my plans for a limited operation to the then Minister of War and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, General Mohammed Ahmed Sadek. He flatly rejected them.

The operation, he said, would be of no value politically or militarily. Politically it would achieve nothing because Sinai would remain under enemy occupation. Militarily it would cause us more problems than the Israelis. Our present defensive positions were protected by the canal, a formidable obstacle to enemy ground assaults or raids.

Shift our defenses over the canal and we would not only be denying ourselves the canal as a barrier, we would be creating fragile lines of communication over our canal bridges. Sadek was convinced that when we did launch our offensive it had to be forceful and unlimited: a clean, swift sweep through Sinai and the Gaza Strip to destroy the enemy concentrations.

I said I could agree with his idea—if it were possible. But how could we do it? We did not have the means and I saw no prospect of our getting them in the near future. If the Soviet Union supplied us with what we needed Sadek said, we could launch the offensive inside a year, perhaps less. I failed to share his optimism. But when I repeated the analysis that had led me to propose a more limited plan, Sadek brushed it aside. He asked me to draw up a plan for the liberation of all our occupied territory.

I could not agree. It was impossible because the resources were impossible. We would need vast quantities of equipment. Much of it was still under development; much of it the Soviet Union was not ready to give. Even if the Soviets did supply us, we would need several years to absorb it, especially into the air force and air defense system.

After long debate, General Sadek accepted a compromise. Actually, in great secrecy, he accepted two. The overt compromise between us was that he accepted the idea of an offensive limited at least to the seizing of the key Sinai passes 30-40 miles east of the canal. This plan we called Operation 41. In reality, its only virtue was that it would need less equipment than a wholesale assault across Sinai, so the supplies list presented to the

Soviets would be less traumatic. Therein lay the point. The preparation and development of Operation 41 was to be done in full collaboration with our Soviet advisers, so that they could form their own conclusions about our arms and equipment needs. After the strategic exercises, you might say, came the educational exercise.

Meanwhile, the real compromise between Sadek and myself was that, in parallel with Operation 41 but in total secrecy from the Soviets, a second operation was to be planned: The High Minarets. This would be based more closely on the actual capability of our armed forces, as opposed to some notional capability after untold arms shipments. Its objective was the limited goal I had set of a five or six-mile penetration. By September 1971, though nobody outside a tight handful of our planning staff had ever heard its name, the outline of The High Minarets had been drawn. It was Egypt's first realistic offensive plan.

Operation 41 was also ready by September 1971, complete with its long list of arms equipment. Involving the Soviet advisers had still not prevented lengthy, well-worn arguments: the Soviets accusing us of exaggerating our needs; the Egyptians accusing Moscow of delaying the supply of offensive, as against defensive, weaponry. Even when President Sadat and General Sadek flew to Moscow in October 1971 and concluded our biggest arms deal so far with the Soviet Union, not all the needs of Operation 41 were met. Despite the 100 MIG-21 FMs and the brigade of mobile SAM-6s the deal promised, our air defenses would remain too weak to repel enemy air strikes if we moved forces eastward beyond our umbrella of static SAMs.

But by then, my more immediate concern was the behavior of President Sadat. Apart from technical limitations, the other controlling factor was that, even if the new equipment arrived at once, it would take us six months to absorb it into service—say till April 1972. Taking over a new weapons system is not like picking up a knife and fork. But the President persisted in beating the drums of war, in speech after speech calling 1971 the "year of decision." On his return from Moscow he declared himself Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, to demonstrate, he said, his determination to go to war before the end of the year. In their euphoric speculation, about the only thing the Egyptian media did not give was the date and time of our supposed attack.

Perturbed, I approached General Sadek. "The President is putting us in a very difficult position," I said. "If we really are going to war this year, he is depriving us of any possible surprise. If we are not, he is giving Israel the excuse to launch a strike against us—and at the very least to get still more weapons from the United States." Sadek agreed totally. He said he had discussed the topic with the President. "I believe the President is making a political bluff," he said.

I was not much taken with this sort of bluffing. Just to make certain it was not ourselves who were taken by surprise, by perhaps finding ourselves politically obliged to launch an offensive, I put in hand preparations to activate The High Minarets. But the "year of decision" faded and through 1972 our twin plans steadily developed. Operation 41 was renamed Granite Two, but in all but trivial details remained the same: objective, troops, directions of attack, and so on. Equally few changes were made to The High Minarets.

As we entered the latter half of 1972, my assessment remained that of 1971. The High Minarets was the only plan possible with our actual resources. Granite Two remained a paper plan, impossible with the means at hand. Certainly, Granite Two exercised a certain fascination. The seizure of the passes would be such a dramatic victory. But the three reasons why it was impossible remained unchanged: the limited capability of our air force to carry out reconnaisance, give air cover or provide ground support; our shortage of mobile SAMs to compensate for this; and the vulnerability of our ground forces' transport. To advance anything up to 45 miles into the desert before solving those problems would be, once again, tantamount to suicide.

Plan Badr Takes Shape

At the end of October 1972, General Ahmed Ismail Ali was appointed Minister of War in succession to General Sadek. I knew Ismail Ali's general views about war from a report he had prepared at the start of the year in his previous job as head of the National Intelligence Service. It was a political and strategic estimate of the situation in the Middle East, drafted for the President but given limited distribution at the most senior levels. Ismail had concluded that Egypt was not ready for war. He warned that any attack mounted or led by Egypt under present conditions might lead to disaster. When I went to see the new Minister of War, therefore, to brief him on our plans and their genesis, I reminded him of what he had written.

"There have been no important changes in the armed forces since your report," I said, "especially in the air

force and the mobile air defense system." But I added: "Even so, I do believe we can launch an attack with a limited objective." When I showed him the two plans—Granite Two and The High Minarets—and gave him my analysis of both, Ismail agreed. Granite Two was impossible on present resources. We should carry on with The High Minarets. The spring of 1973, six months away, was assigned as a possible date for attack.

At this point, if final details were to be settled the plan now had to be discussed among a wider circle of officers. At these discussions, I noted, one question predominated: "When and how do we expect the enemy to counter-attack?" The question went to the heart of our planning. The nature and speed of the enemy's counter-attacks would depend on two factors: how long he had to prepare; and what sort of target we presented to him.

In our strategic exercises since 1968, the years of that initial and unreal plan, Granite, we had assumed counter-attacks within 15-30 minutes of our crossing by sub-units ranging from tank platoons to a reinforced tank battalion. Enemy troops on the Bar-Lev line and their forward armor stationed no more than five miles behind it would organize those. Within two hours, the remainder of the enemy's three armored brigades attached to the Bar-Lev line—but based 10-20 miles behind it—would probably be in action. Against even those, however, our assault forces should be large enough to cope. But the main force the enemy had allocated to the defense of Sinai, another four armored brigades plus four mostly mechanized infantry brigades, would obviously take time to deploy across Sinai from bases in the east. The crucial question was how long? Granite had assumed we would

have 36-48 hours before concerted counter-attack by those forces. Would we?

That would depend on what warning the enemy had and our estimates of that had steadily risen. First our operations department estimated that our deception plan might conceal preparations long enough to prevent alerting the enemy far in advance. But Israel would certainly be alerted, they said, three days beforehand. Given that, the department believed, Israel could mount a major counter-attack only 24 hours after our assault. Then came the still gloomier prophecies of our Defense Intelligence Department (DID). DID estimated that the enemy would fathom our intention a full 15 days before the attack, giving ample time to mobilize forces and deploy no fewer than 18 brigades in Sinai *before* our assault. Based on that calamitous reading, the main counter-attack could come between H + 6 hours and H + 8 hours. (H-Hour is the time of assault, H + 6 is six hours after the assault starts.) Bluntly, the Director of DID was guarding his rear. If anything went wrong, he was not going to carry the can. Still, DID's view represented what technicians call the downside risk. It had to be faced.

As it stood, our plan envisaged the first waves of infantry crossing in rubber dinghies with portable weapons only. Ferries would start about H + 5 hours and bridges about H + 7 to H + 9 hours. Given their capacity, we could calculate how long it would take our tanks and heavy equipment to reach front-line infantry sub-units in any quantity. The conclusion was that bridgehead divisions could not look to armored support against enemy counter-attacks before H + 10 hours at best, probably H + 12 hours. On the DID's timings, we faced

four to six critical hours. Somehow we had to cover the gap. We managed it:

ONE: We increased the supply of portable anti-tank guided weapons (ATGW) to the spearhead infantry. We stripped not merely our strategic reserves, but all units or formations not directly involved in the initial crossing of their organic anti-tank guided weapons in order to reinforce our spearhead infantry. It was a risk. But it was the only way to give our spearhead the capacity to repel armor. (And we assumed that these extra anti-tank guided weapons would be returned to their mother-units as soon as our tanks had made the crossing.)

TWO: We decided to step up the activities we planned in the enemy's rear, to delay to the last minute the arrival of counter-attacking forces.

THREE: We cut back the planned advance of the infantry assault groups. Now, they would be ordered to entrench approximately three miles east of the canal, with both flanks securely lodged against its bank. There they would await heavy support weapons before further advance. By pulling back each bridgehead, shortening its perimeter, we could concentrate our defensive fire, raise the density of ATGWs along each mile of front and increase our chances of repelling counter-attacks. These new, confined bridgeheads could also be given supporting artillery and anti-tank fire from our own west bank of the canal. Moreover, the infantry would also be well under our SAM umbrella. (The point being that our SAMs would remain west of the canal, out of range of the enemy's field artillery, until that had been destroyed or driven back. Initially, until the SAMs could be moved ponderously forward, the depth of the SAM umbrella east of the canal would be very limited.)

* * *

The concept we never questioned, even in that reappraisal, was the plan to cross the canal on the widest possible front. That had been basic to our thinking even in 1968.

First, an assault on a small concentrated front would provide an ideal target for enemy air strikes as our forces marshalled before the crossing and during the crossing itself. Second, our infantry divisions were currently in defense west of the canal, each responsible for a sector of the waterway. Launching them into attack within those same sectors would simplify things. Our assault forces could stay in their defensive positions until the last moment. The defense works in each sector—trenches, shelters, dug-outs, and so on, could be concentration points for the assault. (To construct new sites might alert the enemy.) We could minimize the movements of the assault forces, cutting the risk of attracting a pre-emptive strike. Third, if the enemy subsequently chose to counter-attack along the whole front, their effort would be diluted. Our tanks, anti-tank guns and ATGWs would stand a better chance of repelling them. Our SAMs would perform better against a lower density of aircraft. The enemy would, in those circumstances, stand little chance of destroying a single division bridgehead. And fourth, if on the other hand, the enemy chose to concentrate on particular sectors, one or two bridgeheads might successfully be destroyed. But from our three or more surviving ones we could restore those temporarily crushed.

Our changes to accomodate the DID's gloom about the speed of counter-attacks were, it proved, the last significant alternations of our plan. As we went into action, this was the plan of attack:

ONE: Five infantry divisions, each reinforced with an armored brigade—plus extra sub-units of ATGWs and portable SAMs drawn from other formations—to storm the Suez Canal along five sectors each three miles wide.

TWO: Objective: to destroy the Bar-Lev line piecemeal and to repel enemy counter-attacks.

THREE: These divisional bridgeheads to penetrate to a depth of about five miles by H + 18 to H + 24 hours, each bridgehead then being about eight miles wide.

FOUR: By H + 48 hours, the divisions to have closed the gaps between their five bridgeheads to form two army-strength bridgeheads. By H + 72 hours, these two Army bridgeheads to have joined into one armed forces bridgehead penetrating six to nine miles east of the canal.

FIVE: Troops to dig in and assume the defense of these new positions.

SIX: Airborne and seaborne units to be used on a large scale to neutralize enemy HQs and to delay the approach of their reserves.

* * *

It was approaching April 1973 when General Ismail Ali told me he wanted me, after all, to develop our plans for assault to the passes—in effect, to revive Granite Two. Once again, in yet more long discussions, I went through the obstacles. Ismail could not fault my analysis. Finally he confessed the truth. It was a political instruction. President Sadat was in contact with the Syrian government. It was clear that if the Syrians realized that our plan was limited to the capturing of a line less than ten miles east of the canal, they would not go to war alongside us. My answer was that militarily I would prefer us to go it alone this time. Our success would encourage

the Syrians to join us in the later rounds. Ismail rejected that course. It had been decided that an alliance with Syria was a political necessity. I reiterated the present military impossibility of Granite Two.

Finally, Ismail proposed a solution. He told me to prepare, separate from the crossing plan, another plan for the development of our attack towards the passes. Details of this, he said, would serve to satisfy the Syrians. But he promised that it would never be implemented except under the most favorable conditions. "Suppose," Ismail said, "the enemy suffered heavy losses to his air-force during our crossing. Suppose he decided in consequence to withdraw his forces from Sinai. Should we say stay where we are because we have no plan?"

I was sickened by the duplicity. But I was bound to obey—and to keep the secret. Even in this memoir, I have been reluctant to divulge it; but the facts, however shaming, must be told. Nations, like people, learn by their errors. So, under orders, we prepared and disseminated a plan for the passes: an updated Granite Two. But to our own forces, at least, we did not conceal the truth. The service and army commanders were all warned that the two phases—the crossing and the drive to the passes—were wholly independent. When they in turn instructed their officers, they were to speak in detail of the crossing plan but only in the broadest terms of developing the attack to the east. The truth was that neither I nor any of my subordinates dreamed the second phase would be carried out. Our phraseology made that clear. "After an operational pause," we would say, "we will develop our attack to the passes"—military shorthand for saying that we would have to reconsider the situation before taking the second step.

But how could we ensure this? It worried Ismail too; but then he worried about everything. "We are going to war," he remarked gloomily one day in September 1973. "If everything goes well, nobody will spare us any of the credit. If anything goes wrong, the search will be on for scapegoats." He was so frightened our plan might not work that I tried to comfort him with my own conviction it would. "That's all very well," Ismail replied, "but it would be better if the President issued a directive assigning us a clearcut mission, one within the actual capabilities of our armed forces. With that, we could not be faced with new missions we might be unfit for."

Ismail had been sacked twice by Nasser and the scars went deep. Before taking any step, his first thought was how to guard his flanks and rear. He insisted on everything in writing, not just from superiors but from his subordinates as well. But this time I supported him: we both knew what he was talking about. "I think we will go to war whether that presidential directive is issued or not," I said. "But it would be a good idea to get one."

A couple weeks later, towards the end of September, Ismail called me into his office. He had the directive. It was *pro forma* except for one sentence: "The actions and operations to be carried out by the armed forces within their own capabilities." Theoretically, GHQ could now veto any mission as being beyond our capabilities. I congratulated Ismail on getting it. He asked me to acknowledge the directive by signing it. Without hesitation I took out my pen, wrote at the foot of the directive *"Inshallah"*—we shall succeed—and signed.

The name of the operation thus set in motion was almost the last point to be settled. Something more

inspirational than our planning title, The High Minarets, was obviously needed. It was in September 1973, less than a month before our assault, that October 6 was finally selected as D-Day. In the Islamic calendar, that would be the tenth day of the month of Ramadan in the year 1393. During the month of Ramadan in the Christian year 624, the forces of the Prophet Mohammed won their first victory at the Battle of Badr. Operation Badr named itself.

Chapter Three: Rebuilding

Controlling armed forces of a million or so men presents its problems. When I was appointed Chief of Staff in May 1971, we had some 800,000 men in active service. Shortly before the October War, the total swelled to about 1,050,000. With an additional 150,000 mobilized on the eve of war and during the fighting, our armed forces totalled 1.2 million at their peak.

I have already explained why fewer than half of our forces were available for front-line combat. My job, nevertheless, encompassed all troops. To assist me I had the General Headquarters (GHQ), itself an apparatus with 5,000 officers and 20,000 enlisted men. At its apex were 40 generals who served as my direct assistants and subordinates. That was merely the first layer. The armed forces were split into 14 commands and military districts: Navy, Air Force, Air Defense, Second Army, Third Army, Paratroops, Rangers, Red Sea District, Northern District, Western District, Central District, Middle District, Southern District and Port Said. Between myself and the

fighting man lay seven intermediate layers of command.

I determined to find a way of short circuiting that bureaucracy. Meanwhile, the first priority was training. A Chief of Staff is responsible for training of the armed forces as a whole. His main and immediate responsibility however, is the top-level training of the commands subordinate to him. I began with those I have listed.

A good deal had already been started. Since 1967 a series of command-level exercises had been carried out—some involving individual commands, others focusing on coordination between different commands —under the code name Liberation. Five days after I took over as Chief of Staff I found myself, on May 21, 1971, directing Liberation 18. (My last such exercise was Liberation 35, which began on June 24, 1973.) Each exercise would last three to six days, and was designed to pose operational problems that might be met in real war. In the eighteen Liberation exercises I controlled as Chief of Staff, I made it a rule to spend the whole time with the troops, living and eating with them, joyfully abandoning my paperwork. They recalled my years as a field officer and were among my happiest days as Chief of Staff.

It was, no doubt, because of those years that the gulf between myself and the fighting man so concerned me. I have never been satisfied with issuing orders and receiving reports through chains of subordinates. I prefer direct and continuous contact with my junior officers and men in the front line. In previous commands, I managed it. As Battalion Commander I had seen my men every day; as Brigade Commander, once a week. As Commander of Special Forces—most of them in one base, Inshas—

I could still see everyone once a week. Even as Commander of the Red Sea District, with its 600-mile front, I had let no month go by without a tour of the troops. Now, as Chief of Staff of an enormous military machine scattered over more than 390,000 square miles, that tradition of systematic personal visits was clearly impossible. Yet it was essential to restore its essence. If I relied as Chief of Staff on the traditional chain of command, only one of the seven layers between me and the fighting man had to fail in its communications task and the work at GHQ could be disabled.

This was not a cult of personality. I had always been one of those field commanders passionately concerned with minor tactics: the battlefield skills of the smallest section, platoon or company. The best plan in the world is useless if the young officer or his men do not have the training or will to carry it out. Every commander, however exalted, whatever armies he disposes, must keep in touch with his "poor bloody infantry"—know what they can do, sense what they can feel, imbue them in turn with what he feels and what he demands. Without that rapport he is no more than a "classroom commander," a master of maps maybe, but lost on the field. Many of the weaknesses in our armed forces, it was clear to me, stemmed from persistent failure in precisely this area. Our senior commanders had neglected the training and development of the individual soldier. The rapid expansion of our armed forces since 1967, filling units with under-trained soldiers led by under-trained officers, had merely deepened our plight. These conditions had to be improved.

Reaching the Soldier

I adopted new methods and opened new channels of communication. My first step was to begin a monthly meeting. To it, I decreed, would come my 40 assistant generals, the heads of the 14 subordinate commands *plus* the next layer of command in each (the divisional commanders of the ground forces and so on). In all, 90-100 generals. Each meeting lasted six to eight hours, broken only by short coffee breaks and a collective and deliberately convivial lunch in the GHQ cafeteria.

From my days as a field officer I understood the misunderstandings between field and staff. Field officers see staff officers as bureaucratic, removed from the reality of battle, seeking only to impress their authority through ridiculous orders and regulations. Staff officers see field units as extravagant, wasteful and careless of instructions, especially administrative and technical ones. As Chief of staff I felt myself still a field officer, yet I now controlled all staffwork. It seemed to me crucial to break down the barriers of mistrust. The monthly meetings and their comradely lunches were my means. The only model I can give for them is a democratic parliamentary assembly. Decisions emerged after free discussion. As they listened and spoke, staff officers—some with little or no field experience—began to realize the problems of field commanders; while field commanders saw, for the first time, reasons for limitations the staff imposed. At most meetings sensible decisions emerged to ninety percent of the problems we discussed. Where one clearly needed more study, a joint field-staff committee would be set up to consider it and report to the next meeting.

I guided the discussions; and would adjudicate when necessary, which was rare.

The system achieved all I had hoped. And I, at the same time, made direct contact with both chains of command, field and staff. But what to do about the layers still between me and the fighting man? These I decided to penetrate with directives.

All commanders use directives to a degree, but I tried a novel approach. Mine were, for a start, irregular, each one inspired by a specific incident, a particular mistake. But I tried to go beyond mere correction of error, important as that was. I tried to instill new ideas and new concepts. Every word was chosen with care. I put everything I had into their composition. The papers had differing grades of secrecy. Some were distributed only at brigade level, others to battalion; but most were directed to company commanders with instructions that they should pass on their message to their men. Whenever I visited the forces, I made a point of questioning all levels to see if they knew the applicable directives. I was astonished at the results. One of the happiest moments of my career came at the Suez front on October 8, two days after our crossing. Wherever I went, the troops cheered and shouted: "Directive 41, we did it!" In Directive 41, I had laid down how our infantry divisions would cross the canal.

With directives, I could reach company commanders. They in turn were supposed to instruct, command, and control the men under their command. But armed forces of a million men require roughtly 10,000 company commanders or their equivalent. In no way could I ensure that all of them would be efficient. So I decided to

establish direct contact even with non-commissioned officers and men.

To do this I wrote pamphlets, mini-booklets really, of pocket-size. Six I wrote and distributed before the battle. The titles indicate their range: *Soldier's Guide; Driver's Guide; Observation Post Guide; Military Traditions; Guide to Safety if Lost in the Desert;* and *Our Belief in God and in our Cause is our Road to Victory.* The first and last were each printed in 1.2 million copies so every man would get one; and my orders were strict that the latter, which was distributed in midsummer, three months before the battle, must be carried at all times, since none could know when battle would come. (When the Israelis later found it on prisoners taken in the fighting, their Zionist allies abroad tried to twist my phrases to accuse me of ordering our men to kill prisoners in cold blood. That is a lie, as a reading of the text by any impartial international group would confirm. I could never give such an order. It is against my religion. It is against my entire ethos as a soldier. To kill a prisoner would be an act of cowardice; I could never order brave men to be cowards.)

In retrospect, I think that the two pamphlets issued after the ceasefire—my seventh and eighth—will be of future importance. Pamphlet No. 7, *Guide to Junior Officers in Infantry and Mechanized Infantry Formations,* was published on December 5, 1973. The eighth, *Guide to Junior Officers in Armored Formations,* I revised and approved for publication a week later, on December 11, the day before my dismissal. Since it was one of my last official acts, I am glad it will have lasting value. Both pamphlets were based on the experiences of the

October War. We had by then studied our own failings. We had also studied the enemy's, evaluating every Israeli tactic both from our encounters with them and from interrogation of the prisoners we took. We found the Israeli prisoners, for the most part, eager to talk. The assault had evidently shattered so many of their illusions that they seemed to feel a pressing need to justify themselves to us, a not uncommon psychological phenomenon.)

I regard my seventh and eighth pamphlets as being of paramount importance for two further reasons. The first I previously mentioned as a consideration driving me toward a limited assault: to learn war, fight war. The October War taught us modern warfare; those pamphlets codify its lessons. The second reason I have already diagnosed as the root cause of many of our weaknesses in battle: the persistent failure of senior commanders to train and develop the individual soldier. Our junior officers were equally neglected. I commonly met young lieutenants or captains, sergeants even, who could discourse lucidly on battalion or brigade tactics but floundered when questioned on the conduct of a section or platoon. It was not their fault; it reflected the bias of their training. Those last two pamphlets, properly used, will continue the reforms I began.

* * *

Young officers need more than knowledge, of course. They need to learn leadership—how to bear responsibility and make decisions. Yet our practice had always been to keep junior officers under stultifying strict supervision. It was time to loosen the reins.

I instituted Adventure Training: sending young officers

and their men into the wilds equipped to fend for themselves while completing some self-selected task. I first had the idea as our defense attache in London in 1961-63. (It is of course a recognized part of training in Western armies.) But when I decided to introduce it in 1972, some eyebrows were raised. The arguments for it were clear, though. Only by getting away from their commanders could young officers learn individual responsibility. Travelling and camping together for days or even weeks would strengthen ties between men and between officers and enlisted men. These tasks were not to be boringly military; an element of recreation was also to be present: trekking to some distant place of interest, perhaps, or a project to explore or study something. My directive authorized the use of military transport, food and first-aid packs for these adventure groups. I also decreed that reports had to be submitted afterwards and would count toward a young man's career prospects. To spur the scheme I personally examined the first batch. The best, I recall, was from Lieutenant Atif Abdelbaky el Said. On September 25, 1972, I had the pleasure of receiving him and his divisional commander in my office and presenting the young man with a watch.

Building the Forces

The figures give the measure of our task. In May 1971 we had in active service some 800,000 troops; 36,000 officers, 764,000 NCOs and men. By October 1973, barely two-and-a-half years later, we had 1.2 million troops: 66,000 officers, and 1,134,000 NCOs and men. How, in 29 months, did we create 30,000 officers and more than 370,000 NCOs and men?

As I viewed it in May 1971, the famine of officers posed the more serious problem. Moulding a good soldier is hard enough; building an officer is tougher still. We faced not only a dearth of officers for new units, but even our existing units were 30-40 percent short of their wartime officer complement, a shortage of 15,000 officers. We still needed another 15,000 officers for new units to be created in the coming two years. But the maximum output from our military, naval and air force academies plus our reserve officers' college was 3,000 officers a year. Our existing officer reserve could not ease the strain: we had already called them all up. Without officers, what could we do? It was not primarily a matter of officers giving commands. The crucial role of officers is the training of their men *before* the battle starts. Without officers, training would suffer; that, in turn, would damage our units' fighting efficiency. Were we then to postpone the war for ten years?

I decided upon a drastic solution: the creation of a new junior rank called War Officer. He would be qualified in a single specialization, with the barest knowledge of the other skills of soldiering. On that emergency basis, training could be cut to four or five months. At the end of it, the War Officer would be able, just, to command some specific platoon—a job he would hold throughout the war.

Luckily, we had a pool to draw from. Among our NCOs and men were about 25,000 university graduates. They were the logical candidates. Turning most of them into officers would solve a chronic discipline problem as well. We were plagued with quarrels, even fights, between these university graduates and their platoon and company commanders. Over the two year period from 1971-73

another 10,000 graduates were called up, swelling our pool to 35,000. We trained 25,000 as War Officers. Meanwhile, our academies trained 5,000 career officers by more conventional means. We had our extra 30,000. By the eve of the October War, we had filled our ranks of officers, with one or two percent margin for casualties.

Filling our ranks of soldiers posed other headaches. The armed forces needed about 160,000 draftees a year. Demographically, Egypt with its population of 35 million produced 350,000 young men of draftable age each year. The reality—I write of the early 1970s—was that out of those 350,000 we could find barely 120,000 who satisfied our minimum education and health standards. Regularly, we had a shortage of 40,000 recruits a year.

I decided on two steps. The first was to accept, under *force majeure*, lower medical and education standards. The second was to open the door to women for certain base and rear unit roles: secretaries, telephone operators, cooks and the like. I did not achieve the latter without dissent. When I threw open our problems of manpower for discussion at one of my monthly meetings, the majority rejected the idea of women in the armed forces, even as volunteers. After a heated discussion, it was clear I would have to be content with women limited to being secretaries. (The first volunteers finished training in November 1973.) I could not help reflecting that women had joined our armed forces as nurses 20 years before, and wondered how long the next step would take.

* * *

That extra manpower—30,000 officers and 370,000 NCOs and men—was the key to our creation of hundreds

of new units in the two years before the war. It would be tedious to enumerate them all. I mention, as examples, only those specialized units we created to ease or solve the problems of the crossing itself.

One was the amphibious brigade. We decided to set it up in January 1972, after studies for The High Minarets had thrown up problems of timing. We did not envisage having ferries to take heavy tanks and heavy equipment into our bridgeheads before H + 5 Hours, nor bridges before H + 7 to H + 9 Hours. But on the east bank of the Bitter Lakes, the Israelis had built neither defenses nor obstacles. An amphibious brigade could take tanks and heavy equipment over the lakes in less than an hour.

We organized the brigade from one of our special forces units, so it could be used to deploy high firepower with maximum mobility. We gave it 20 or so amphibious tanks and some 80 amphibious mechanized infantry combat vehicles (MICVs). By mid-1972, the brigade was almost ready; on June 15, 1972, I issued Directive 15: *An Amphibious Battalion Acting as a Spearhead Force Across a Water Barrier.* A demonstration was carried out under my supervision on August 28. The first proper field exercise came on the night of October 22/23. Steadily tougher training followed, with the brigade gradually attempting voyages as long as six hours. Finally I decided the time had come to test its true capabilities and prepared an exercise for the night of July 18/19, 1973. The brigade's mission was:

ONE: To embark with amphibious tanks and MICVs from a concentration area near the sea.

TWO: To complete a sea voyage of almost 20 miles by night.

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THREE: To land at a designated location and time.

FOUR: To proceed inland to attack enemy positions and hold the advance of enemy reserves.

The mission was, of course, very similar to what I had in mind for the brigade during the war, though if anything somewhat tougher. The High Minarets required the brigade to cross barely five miles of water. I had deliberately piled on the hazards.

I stayed with the brigade throughout that night. One battalion did fulfill its mission; the other lost its way at sea and came ashore out of location and in some trouble. Two of its vehicles and ten of its men were missing. We picked up seven of them; three were drowned. Despite that, the brigade's confidence grew remarkably: they had learned a lot of lessons, but now they knew what they and their equipment could do.

Less than 80 days later, the training paid off. On October 6, the amphibious brigade crossed the Bitter Lakes in less than one-half hour and without a casualty. I was in the Operations Room when I heard the news. I spared a moment to offer a silent prayer for the three who had given their lives for that success.

* * *

Amphibious assault might take us around the Israeli flank, but the frontal crossing of the canal was fundamentally an engineering problem. The plan required our engineers to carry out enormous tasks:

ONE: Open 70 passages through the sand barrier.

TWO: Build ten heavy-duty bridges for tanks and heavy equipment.

THREE: Build five light bridges, each with a capacity of four tons.

FOUR: Build ten pontoon bridges for infantry.

FIVE: Build and operate 35 ferries.

SIX: Crew 720 rubber dinghies for the initial assault.

All this to be tackled simultaneously in the shortest possible time. The passages were to be opened in 5 to 7 hours, immediately followed by the ferries, then the bridges two hours later. All this under enemy fire.

Clearly, we would need great skill and even greater courage. But our first need was for men and equipment. It will be seen why the creation of engineer units was a top priority. In just over two years we succeeded in creating and training almost 40 engineer battalions, some of them highly specialized. It was our biggest coup and the foundation of our success. In his memoirs, the Israeli Chief of Staff, General David Elazar, records that during a discussion in the Israeli High Command of the possibility of Egyptian forces attempting to cross the canal, General Dayan, the Israeli Defense Minister, said: "To cross the canal the Egyptians would need the support of both the American and the Soviet engineer corps." I do not hold Dayan's dismissive remark against him. I accept the tribute. I know how hard we worked.

The Problems of Crossing

At the start of this account, I outlined the multiple obstacles that the canal and its defenses presented: (1) the concrete banks rising up to three yards above the water level; (2) the enemy's sand rampart towering as high as 60 feet over the eastern bank; (3) the infantry brigade in the 35 forts of the Bar-Lev line—reinforced, if we gave the enemy warning, by two armored brigades

pouring fire on our assault forces from prepared positions on top of the rampart; and (4) the Israelis' secret weapon—their capacity to turn the surface of the canal into an inferno. To overcome all this, we had a straightforward technique. We tackled each aspect in turn, breaking it into even smaller components until, piece by piece, we could construct a solution.

The fundamental problem, clearly, was to drive passages through the sand barrier. Without those, we could neither build bridges nor establish ferries. Without bridges and ferries, we could not transfer tanks and heavy weapons to the far bank. Without them our infantry, however successful their own crossing, could not long repel counter-attacks.

By mid-1971, when I took over as Chief of Staff, GHQ had only a rudimentary answer to the problem. Engineers were to cross in rubber dinghies as soon as the first waves of infantry could provide covering fire. With shovels, the engineers would dig holes in the sand barrier and insert the explosive. Retiring 200 yards, they would detonate it. The theory was that the deeper we dug into the sand barrier, and the more explosive we inserted, the more sand each detonation would remove. The reality was that it is almost impossible to dig a deep hole in sand: the sand runs like fluid and erases your work. We knew what width of breach our vehicles would need. Simple arithmetic then told us that for each passage our engineers would have to clear about 1,900 cubic yards of sand, at speed and probably under fire. But with explosives, our best efforts were blowing away no more than 250-400 cubic yards, leaving another 1,500 cubic yards or more to be dug out by hand or by a bulldozer, if we could land one.

In my first weeks as Chief of Staff, through May and June 1971, the Corps of Engineers organized several demonstrations by day and night to show me how they could do the task. I was unsatisfied. First, the method was dangerous. How, in the heat of battle, were we to synchronize the explosions of the engineers with the crossing of our infantry so that at the crucial moment, but with no time wasted, our troops would be out of range of each charge? The only way, so far as I could see, would be to postpone detonation until all the infantry had crossed. But that would set back the bridges and ferries by at least four hours—four hours more risk for our infantry as, unsupported, they faced armored counter-attack. Finally, the method was very costly in manpower and materials. To force a single breach by this method appeared to need 60 men, one bulldozer, 500 lbs. of explosives and five or six hours of work uninterrupted by enemy fire—in all, about 1,200 man-hours per passage. But such tight knots of men would be irresistible targets for enemy artillery fire. It was an unrealistic scheme.

Saying as much to the director of our engineer corps, General Gamal Ali, I asked him to explore new ideas. He at once replied that one of his young engineers had suggested scouring the passages with water cannon. That had been tried in the construction of the Aswan Dam, though with much heavier pumping gear than we could easily handle. What we needed were light pumps floated across the canal in rubber boats. It sounded brilliantly simple. I asked General Ali to arrange a demonstration, and the first trial was carried out within days, in June 1971, using three British-made water pumps scrounged from here and there.

The technique worked. We found that to scour a cubic yard of sand needed only a cubic yard of water; from that it was easy to calculate the best mix of pumps for our purpose; and the British economy promptly got an uncovenanted benefit. We ordered 300 pumps like those on trial. The first batch arrived in late 1971, the rest in early 1972. Our trials found that five of the pumps could blast through 1,500 cubic meters of sand in three hours. Later we bought another 150 German pumps more powerful than the British ones. With two German pumps and three British ones, and without enemy interference, we could now clear a breach in two hours. It was a superb solution, and from July 1971 our chosen technique. I pay tribute to the young engineer who thought of it, and to all his colleagues who labored to perfect it. (When, two months before the war, documents on an Israeli spy we captured showed that the Israeli intelligence service still did not know of the technique, I was relieved—though, in view of the hundreds of experiments we had done, a trifle surprised.)

* * *

The inflammable liquid posed the only other fundamental problem, in the sense of inhibiting everything else we had planned. In June 1971, I was shown how our engineers proposed to cope with this, too. Their idea was primitive. Squads in fire-proof suiting, equipped with palm fronds, were to beat out the flames. The idea was that they could disperse the body of fire into scattered islands which could then be beaten out one by one. The only other proposal was the creation of amphibious fire-fighting units with chemical extinguishers.

I rejected both as cumbersome and costly. After much study, however, I was driven to conclude that the only

satisfactory solution was to deny the enemy the chance to use this weapon, which was easier than it might seem. The components of the system were: the reservoir (about 200 tons); the pipe and canal outlet; and the control gear. It was vulnerable in two ways. To cut accidents, each reservoir and outlet were some hundreds of yards from the fort which controlled them. And while the pipes ran underground, the outlets were just visible in the bank at low water and, along most of the canal, submerged only a couple of feet at high water. Raiding parties could slip across a few hours before the attack and block them. They could also try to lay charges to crack open the reservoir; or we could try artillery fire, so the fuel would seep away into the sand of the rampart.

Almost certainly, we would fail to block all the outlets. But the canal has a gentle current that would carry the burning oil downstream. Very well, let us locate our crossing points upstream of the nearest outlet. If none of those worked, though, I did not think we could realistically attempt fire-fighting. If for other reasons a crossing point had to be downstram of an outlet we had not blocked, we would simply have to delay that crossing until the fire had slackened. (I was amused when, during the war, the Israelis denied the existence of the system. I could only assume they feared that word of such an "ungentlemanly" weapon might tarnish their image.)

Equipping the Infantry

All of which was no more than a trial run to the greater hurdle: enabling our infantry, once on the east bank, to defend their bridgeheads against armored attack. To

recapitulate: our ferries would start at H + 5 to H + 7 Hours, the bridges would follow two hours later. Our tanks and other support units would not reach the far bank in quantity before H + 12 Hours. (Administrative elements and units would not join their mother-units before H + 18 Hours.)

In essence it would be like an airborne operation, where paratroopers are dropped in the enemy's rear and, relying solely upon what they can carry—arms, ammunition, equipment, provisions—are ordered to hold out for one or two days before relief by the advancing main force. Except that paratroopers can usually expect surprise to provide a lull before the counter-attack, whereas our infantry should expect assault by armor supported by air strikes virtually from the moment of crossing.

Equipment was available. We could give a man anti-tank guided weapons (ATGWs) to repel armor, and portable SAM-7s against low-flying aircraft. We could give him ammunition, food and water for 24 hours. We could give him anti-tank mines to consolidate a group of foxholes into a strongpoint. But how could we expect him to carry all that?

It was a real headache. A soldier cannot carry more than 60-65 pounds without a marked drop in his performance—and that weight included everything. Repeating to myself the old paratroopers' dictum "maximum firepower, minimum frills," and with lists in front of me of what every soldier in an airborne brigade carried, I sat down and began the endless task of juggling weights.

First, survival needs. For 24 hours, plus a margin in case he hit trouble or got lost, each man would need five

pounds of food and four and a half pints of water, a steel helmet, field kit and minimum clothing. Total: 25 lbs. Margin for weaponry: 40 lbs.

That was ample for the standard infantryman. His rifle, 300 rounds and two grenades weigh about 35 lbs. But what of those carrying portable support weapons? The list was formidable: ATGWs (Russian codename MALOTKA); SAM-7s (codename STRELLA); the 82mm mortar; our anti-tank guns; the 82mm and 107mm recoilless launchers (B-10 and B-11) and the rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs); the medium machineguns; the 12.7 mm anti-aircraft machineguns; the flame-throwers, and on and on. Those are all very heavy. Their crews could never carry them *plus* the minimum ammunition they would need to face the counter-attacks we expected.

The solution was to distribute the loads among groups of infantry men detailed to stick together as assault teams (which sounds easy until you try to ensure that each member of the team can still carry out individual tactical tasks). Even so, I did not succeed. When the final lists for each infantry division were drawn up, individual loads varied between 60 lbs. and 75 lbs. and, in a few cases, even heavier.

That was unsatisfactory. But while I brooded on it, some improvements could be made. Our standard field kit, for instance, was unsuitable for the 2,000 officers and 30,000 men of the initial assault force. Among its other deficiencies it was too heavy, while the water bottle was too small. I took our needs to the Quartermaster-General of the Armed Forces, General Nawad Said. By December 1971 General Said had managed to give me 50,000 four-and-a-half pint water bottles. Refining the

rest of the kit proved harder. The multitude of different tasks confronting different soldiers, plus the need to cut the weight problem to expedite the assault teams, meant that our men would be carrying scores of different loads. The ideal field kit would vary with each load—an administrative nightmare. It took us almost a year and a good number of field trials before, on July 12, 1972, I approved five types of infantry field kits, cut back to the bare essentials. Before October that year, the indefatigable General Said had delivered 50,000 kits, enough for our 32,000 assault infantry with 50 percent to spare.

In all we did, we sought simplicity. By July 1972, for example, our assault infantry was equipped not only with infra-red and start-sight scopes for night-fighting but also with welder's goggles. During the War of Attrition, the enemy had taken to mounting tanks and trucks with blinding xenon floodlights to dazzle and immobilize our commando teams operating at the rear of enemy lines. Welder's goggles would neutralize their effect. The first wave of infantry were also given simple rope ladders, 1,440 of them, to hang down the sand rampart for the next wave to scramble up.

* * *

Weight remained the problem. To get loads even as light as they were, we had dropped essential equipment. Our portable support weapons would have far too little ammunition—barely enough, I calculated, for an hour of heavy combat. The assault force would have no mines, no mine detectors, no explosives; no ranging instruments or radios to spot and direct covering artillery fire from the west bank; no signs and direction markers to guide support units to them by day or night. We needed another answer.

The enemy gave it to me. When I went as Commander to the Red Sea District in January 1970, I had begun by studying all previous operations of the enemy in my area. One had been an artillery barrage of Port Safaga, a few months before I arrived. Puzzled, I went to look at the craters, still readily visible. They could only have been made by 120mm mortar fire. So it had been a raid by an airborne mortar team. Knowing the range of the 120mm mortar and looking for helicopter landing-sites I would have chosen had I been the enemy commander, it was not difficult to pinpoint the two likeliest spots on a map. We drove out to find the landing site, and not far away, the tell-tale evidence of mortar firings. Among the abandoned gear was a crude, four-wheeled cart.

As ex-commander of our special forces, I was impressed. It was simple, ingenious, useful. I loaded it onto my car, took it to my HQ and, calling in my Chief Technical Officer, ordered six just like it. He looked it over and said he could do better. Only the wheels posed problems: the armed forces had none so tiny. They reminded him of Vespa wheels—Vespas being those small scooters much favored by our youth. I gave him leave to hunt in El Kanto, the Cairo market for second-hand car parts. When we had his first prototype, we experimented to find optimum loads and dimensions; then we made another five. We found that the most that two men could drag over two or three miles of rough country was 375 lbs.

Now, as Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces struggling to equip our assault troops, those carts came back to me. On July 21, 1971, my diary records that I called in the director of GHQ's vehicles department, General Gamal

Sidky, showed him one of our Red Sea carts and said: "I want 1,000 like it." A few days later, Sidky came back. Wheels were still the problem. Even if we emptied El Kanto, we could fit no more than 100 carts. We would have to make the wheels or import them from Italy and that would take six months. I agreed.

By January 1972 I had my 1,000 carts; October 1972 my second thousand; by April 1973, I had 3,000. In October 1973, our infantry stormed the canal pulling 2,240 carts behind them, carrying 336 tons of war material. On the basis that a man can carry 40 pounds over and above his own survival needs, we would have needed 22,400 unarmed men—porters—to carry what our assault force drew with them.

* * *

Equipment could powerfully increase our infantry's capabilities. But the central question remained. Could 32,000 officers and men, crossing on five separate fronts each four miles wide, stand a good chance of carrying our their mission to destroy the Bar-Lev line and repel counter-attacks? Especially when the enemy's front-line force of 360 tanks (three brigades) would be coming into action in two hours at most, while the Israeli Sinai force of another four armored brigades and four infantry brigades might be expected, on our DID's estimate, in six to eight hours? Nor, in weighing that, could we consider our 32,000 men as a unified bloc, reaching the far bank in a single bound. They would be going over in waves, each differing in size, arms and equipment. The first assault wave, the biggest, would be 4,000 men. The rest would follow in another 11 waves, 15 minutes apart.

I decided the odds were too high. I made two decisions

to reduce them. The first was that we must support our troops on the east bank with the heaviest possible fire from the west bank, especially anti-tank fire. The second, was that our troops would have to stay within range of that fire, which meant we would have to curb their advance still further. They would have to halt no more than three miles east of the canal. There they must wait for tanks and other support units, which would start to reach them about H + 10 Hours. Only after the arrival of this support and the necessary reorganization and regrouping, would our forces enlarge their bridgeheads. Even so, our estimate remained unchanged that by H + 18 Hours each infantry division should have consolidated a bridgehead five miles deep and ten miles wide along the canal.

With all the adjustments needed to tailor equipment and tactics to the infantry's capabilities, therefore, our basic scenario emerged unchanged. The battle of the crossing would only be won 18 hours from the start of our assault.

Marshalling the Crossing

Before our infantry could ever engage the enemy, they had to cross the canal. No equipment, no planning of bridgehead tactics, no covering fire from the west bank, could stave off disaster if the crossing went wrong.

The crossing was the harshest test of our planning in another sense as well. We could build copious margins into timings and capacities; but its detailed framework could have no margin for error. The density of the operation dictated that. A column of tanks arriving at

the wrong point on the west bank, or turning the wrong way on the east bank, could cause disruption far down the line. It had to go right.

The battlefield constraints and our need to swiftly build and reinforce our initial assault forces dictated the scale of the operation. (In turn, our assessment of battlefield need derived from our estimates of the enemy's capacity to counter-attack.) But calculations of crossing timings and capacities then dictated how we broke the operation down.

As a first example, 32,000 troops had to cross on five fronts each three miles wide, in 12 waves at 15-minute intervals. Time allowed: three hours. To get each wave across fast enough we would need eight crossing points along each three-mile sector. To maintain a regular shuttle at each crossing point, calculations of journey-time plus turnaround-time then showed we would need 18 boats per crossing. Total boats per sector: 144. Total boats on all five sectors: 720.

In five to seven hours our engineers must have cleared passages and laid ramps through the sand barrier. While they did that, ferries would have to be launched, and bridges constructed. How many?

Again, we worked backwards from battlefield needs. Our estimate was that, to sustain the bridgeheads, 1,000 tanks and 13,500 support vehicles would have to cross in the first six hours after passages had been opened. The next factor was that we could expect bridges to take two hours longer to prepare than ferries. The final element in the calculation was that we knew, from exercises, that we could roll no more than 100 tanks or 200 other vehicles per hour over each bridge. Conclusions: seven ferries per sector—total: 35. Two heavy-

duty bridges per sector to carry tanks and the like—total: 10. A light bridge for each sector—total: 5. Plus two pontoon bridges on each front for infantry—total: 10.

The light bridges were to serve as dummies for the heavy duty bridges. Their purpose was to attract enemy artillery fire and enemy air strikes, thereby reducing strikes on the major operating bridges. Nevertheless, the light bridges could carry very light transport, up to four tons (such as loaded jeeps).

To clear the passages and construct the ferries and bridges was the task of our engineer corps. I have already sketched how they tackled one aspect of it. Our task, meanwhile, was to marshal our forces over the canal by those routes, and under fire, in such a way that fighting units fanned smoothly into place—and probably into immediate battle on the other side. To do it, we merely extended the dictum that *everything* was subordinated to the needs of the front line.

* * *

The first step was to divide our infantry into two groups: (1) those pursuing the assault on foot (they would cross in dinghies in the initial waves, or over a pontoon bridge if they were reinforcements) and, (2) those who were to ride into battle, which meant waiting for the ferries or bridges. The pontoon bridges (two for each division, ten altogether) were one meter wide and were to be ready at H + 2 Hours. They were to operate side by side with the dinghies to accelerate the ninth through the twelfth waves of infantry crossings, and later could be used to evacuate casualties.

The next step was to assign priorities to all vehicles, including those carrying infantry. As our dictum decreed,

we assigned priority not by unit but by the needs of the front-line. *We marshalled by function.* Each front, it will be recalled, was the task of an infantry division. We categorized the vehicles of each division into six sub-groups, according to battlefield priority:

PRIORITY ONE: Tanks, other combat vehicles, wireless units, heavy mortars, a very few support trucks carrying ammunition. Total: about 200 tanks and 750 other vehicles.

PRIORITY TWO: Field artillery units, anti-aircraft units, more ammunition-carrying vehicles. Total: about 700 vehicles.

PRIORITY THREE: The rest of each infantry battalion's support and administrative vehicles, plus those of each artillery and anti-aircraft battalion. Total: 600.

PRIORITY FOUR: Support and administrative vehicles for each brigade. Total: about 400.

PRIORITY FIVE: Support vehicles for division-level administrative units. Total: 250.

PRIORITY SIX: Transport for the infantry who have already crossed on foot. These vehicles would be forbidden to cross in the first 48 hours. Total: 800.

The system enforced its own logic. Each infantry battalion had to divide its vehicles into four groups: priorities one, two, three, and six. Support forces such as tank or artillery units divided their vehicles into two sub-groups: priorities one or two and three. Each sub-group would then join all other sub-groups of the same priority within the division, meeting at specified points and times, to cross on specified ferries or bridges at specified times. All times would be given as H-plus-X. Once on the east bank, each sub-group would move to its particular mother unit at once, by day or night.

There remained the task of guiding each of these groups to, from and across the canal. Once again, we broke it down.

The Crossing

Each boat on a particular front was given a serial number from 1 to 144 and assigned a particular embarkation and disembarkation point. These would be marked on either bank with numbered signs, visible across the canal by day or night. Each boat would ply between its signs.

Approach and Exit Routes

Approach routes were signposted, each route being given a code number and code color. Lateral routes linking them were laid down, and assigned code letters.

On the east bank, up to three miles in from the canal, exit routes had been planned, each corresponding to one of the approach routes on the west bank, and to be coded with the same color and number. Military police crossing by dinghy while the passages were being cleared would set up these route-markers before the ferries and bridges opened.

Unit Marshalling

Each soldier would have his unit and his priority group marked on his helmet. Each vehicle would bear a label with the same information. Vehicles were then assigned a crossing order within their priority group, which would be marked on each vehicle in chalk. Lists were then drawn

up showing when (H-plus-X) the vehicles in each group were to leave their concentration areas, their routes, the ferries or bridges assigned to them, and the times of crossing.

Every soldier was to be briefed about this system of timing and routes. Each infantryman was to know the number of his boat, the names of those crossing with him, and their order of embarkation and disembarkation. The driver of any vehicle, be it a tank or a truck, was to know the chalk number of his vehicle (and therefore of the vehicle ahead of him), his start-up time, the color and number codes of his approach route and exit routes, and the name and code-sign of the mother unit he was to join.

Finally, to shepherd our forces through this network, we set up a Crossing Command: 500 officers and 1,000 enlisted men with 500 radio sets, 200 field telephones and a pre-laid, 500-mile field telephone system. I was head of the Crossing Command, with the Chief of Staff of each army and the Chief of Staff of each division, controlling the Crossing Command on their front. On the way to and from the canal, every man and vehicle would pass through checkpoints manned by the Crossing Command. The Crossing Command—and only they—were authorized to switch timings, routes and even crossing points as the situation might demand.

The biggest unknown the Command would have to confront was, of course, enemy interference. But our timings incorporated generous margins for that. Timings prescribed for the whole operation were double those achieved in daytime training and 150 percent of those attained by night.

* * *

One major source of delay could have been unexploded bombs. For years, our drills had been to evacuate the area around an unexploded bomb for a full 24 hours before tackling it. I thought this was stupid. It made an unexploded bomb vastly more disruptive than most of those that did go off. Besides, if the enemy learned of this, they would certainly include time-bombs in each cluster dropped. They could be certain that for 24 hours we could neither start repairs if they had damaged the target, nor even carry on as normal if they had not.

I issued new orders. One, unexploded bombs were to be dealt with immediately. Our men would have to risk that they might be time-bombs. Two, if an unexploded bomb lay near a road or a bridge, traffic flow would not halt. Weighing the known blast of Israeli bombs against the gaps decreed between vehicles in our convoys, we could guess that, if a bomb did explode while being defused, it would cost us the lives of 5-20 men. On the other hand, blocking a bridge for an hour would cost our forces at the front 100 tanks or 200 truckloads of other heavy equipment, with who knew what consequences. The same rule I applied to bombs on runways. Planes would ignore them in taking-off and landing. I regret risking lives in that fashion. But better to risk the lives of a few than the battle as a whole. War is not a tourist excursion.

Two other potent sources of delay I also overrode. Until early 1972, our thinking had been that the actual crossing would be carried out only by night. Before daybreak, we would dismantle and conceal our bridges, re-assembling them only after dark. As yet another tribute to enemy air superiority, this struck me as over-cautious. With smoke and dummy bridges, I reckoned we could

sharply reduce the effectiveness of air strikes, while intensive air defenses at each crossing point could hope to inflict heavy losses upon enemy pilots.

That alone might not have made up my mind. But when I came to study details of the crossing the impossibility of the night-only plan was clear.

We had approximately eight or nine hours of darkness to work with. If we started just after dark, the passages could be opened by H + 5 to H + 7 hours, giving the ferries just three hours to operate that first night. The bridges themselves need two hours after the opening of the passages to assemble and another two hours to dismantle. It would be impossible under cover of darkness to complete these tasks with enough time to use the bridges in the crossing. Without the use of the bridges on the first night, the ferries could only transport limited amounts of heavy equipment. During successive nights, still the bridges would only be left with four useful hours for crossing. With one bridge per division and under enemy fire the results would be very poor. A swift build-up would be impossible. I scrapped the plan. From mid-1972, while still assuming our initial assault would come by night, we planned to keep our bridges open the following day.

My other key decision was to allot two heavy bridges to each crossing front. Through 1971, the days of Operation 41 and the early work on the High Minarets, we had planned only one each. But when we kept getting those ever-decreasing estimates of how rapidly the enemy might organize major counter-attacks, my inevitable response was to look for ways of speeding our build-up. I found that with only one bridge, and the possibility that even this might be delayed or damaged by enemy

action, we stood no chance of getting enough tanks or mobile anti-tank weapons across even by H + 12 hours, by which time major enemy formations might have been in action for 4-6 hours. We could not expect our assault forces to repel them for longer than that. I doubled the number of bridges.

That, of course, doubled the work of our engineers, and also put us at the limit of our material resources. We had only 12 bridges at our disposal and 10 were to be laid the first day, vulnerable to air attack from then on. But it was a calculated risk. The faster our build-up, I was convinced, the greater our chance of success.

Mobilizing

As I mentioned previously, before our infantry could ever engage the enemy, they had to cross the canal. But before they could assemble for the crossing, they had to be mobilized, and mobilized in such a way as not to warn the enemy. Yet our mobilization system was, by any criteria, one of the worst in the world. Paradoxically, our solution to this turned out to be one of the most useful elements in our campaign to lull the enemy before October.

Mobilization became a problem for us only in June 1972. Up until then, we had no reserves. In theory, a man served in our reserves for nine years after finishing his period of conscription. In reality, our reserves were already in the army. A political decision had been made after 1967 that draftees in the armed forces would be retained, no matter when their period of conscription expired, until we had regained our lands. The War of Attrition demonstrated that this was a military necessity

in order to meet the massive manpower needs required to guard vital installations throughout the country against enemy raiding parties. By the middle of 1972, however, with our armed forces standing at close to a million men, pressing reasons of economy and morale dictated that we transfer some to the reserves. Draftees had been in for more than six years, with no idea when they could look forward to release. For university graduates desperate to start their careers the problem was particularly acute. In June 1972 the decision was made to transfer 30,000 to the reserves on July 1. The question which promptly faced me was, how could we ever get them back again?

The faults in our existing mobilization system were glaring. A card was kept on each reservist, giving vital statistics, training and skills. Men were summoned on the basis of these. But the card recorded only a reservist's place of birth, not the address he had moved to after leaving the forces. (The impossibility of tracing many reservists can be imagined.) The cards were often wrong: a reservist trained on one weapon might find himself in a unit equipped with another; unskilled men would be confronted with highly technical tasks. No computer or even automated sorter handled the cards, and the manual sorting was so imprecise that too many were frequently summoned in one specialization, too few in another.

The marshalling of the men was then horribly over-centralized. Every reservist had to report to mobilization centers in Cairo, where he was checked, given a kit and rifle, and sent to a particular training center (infantry, armor, artillery) from which he would be assigned to a unit. It was usually a unit he had never served in before, full of people he had never seen before. Even worse, the

officers in charge were often, in the way of the world, those whose previous commanders had been anxious to get rid of them. The system ensured, in sum, that with maximum possibility of error, embittered or incompetent officers would end up commanding a group of confused strangers. Morale and discipline were as bad as one could have predicted.

For comparison, I looked at three of the most efficient mobilization systems in the world: those of Switzerland, Sweden and Israel. The Swiss system I discarded. It allows a reservist to keep his uniform and personal weaponry at home, something our political authorities would never accept. Besides, the Swiss Armed Forces are overwhelmingly infantry, which are the easiest to mobilize. The Israeli system, I discovered, is essentially an amended version of the Swedish system, the amendments stemming largely from the fact that the Swedish system reflects the Swedes' determination to mobilize only for defensive purposes.

In Sweden, all heavy weapons are stockpiled in the areas where they will be used (that is, deployed according to the Swedish defense plan). Those manning the equipment must also live in the area or nearby. If one moves away, someone else local takes his place. Every reserve unit is a continuously evolving but always local entity. It is a marvelous system. It cuts mobilization time to a minimum; annual training is easy; the men in a unit will almost all know each other; and it is hard to see how the incentive of defending your country by defending your home could be bettered. On the debit side, the system lacks flexibility, and from it an enemy could piece together the Swedish defense plan.

I decided to modify the Swedish system to our peculiar

needs. The nationwide aspect of Sweden's reserves was irrelevant. The threat to us comes from Israel; our concentrations have to face them. But we could adopt the idea of consistently-manned reserve units congregating on weapons stockpiled near their point of deployment. Since our conscription law, when applied, gave us nine years reserve service from each ex-draftee, my plan was gradually to build these new reserve units over nine years, increasing them by one-ninth each year, and thereafter replenishing them annually with fresh reservists to replace those whose service was up. Even to lay down the framework for this plan might take a couple of years, though. Meanwhile, I decided to keep our regular units about 15 percent under war strength and to boost them with reservists, the reservists being those units' own former draftees.

Our first step was to drastically overhaul the accuracy of our cards; then to introduce automation and computers so I could call up reserves by unit, by date of release from conscript service, by specialization or even by subspecialization. Our next step was to open 100 mobilization centers covering our most populous areas. (The plan was to have 350-400 eventually covering all Egypt.) A soldier transferring to the reserve was to deliver his uniform to his neighborhood center. On being called up, he would go there, exchange his civilian clothes for his uniform, and go to his unit. In the interim phase, that would be his old regular unit, where his old job and old comrades would be waiting for him. In time, though, he would go to his specially-formed reserve unit, whose weapons and equipment would have been stored and maintained by a cadre of regulars. We reckoned these reserve units could be functioning within 72 hours.[1]

Our interim system went into operation in June 1972, in time for the first batch of new reservists since 1967. (We could not set up the initial 100 mobilization centers in time, so not all that first wave were caught by the system.) Another wave was demobilized at the end of December 1972, a third at the end of June 1973: in all, more than 100,000 officers and enlisted men. We immediately practiced recalling them. The system worked superbly. I had estimated that it would take a reservist 48 hours to reach his old regular unit; but we found that, with practice, a high percentage could report within 24 hours (usually, I was pleased to learn, to considerable festivity from their old comrades). The units were ready for battle in 48 hours.

From January to October 1, 1973, we summoned and then released our reservists 22 times, sometimes for a few days, sometimes for two weeks. The practice perfected the system. More important, the enemy got used to our mobilizations. They became routine training.

On September 27, 1973, we began yet another mobilization, telling the reservists they would be released on October 7. We summoned another batch on September 30, saying we would release them on October 10. On October 4, as a final touch, we demobilized 20,000 reservists (some of those who had been called on September 27). The enemy was lulled. Once again, I was relieved but slightly surprised. Careful logging would have revealed that in those last two mobilizations we had pulled back, for the first time, everyone demobilized since June 1972. The war itself, in other words, was the first complete test of our new system. It worked. I sometimes ask myself how, without it, we could ever have fooled the enemy?

Searching for Weapons

Men need faith in those they go into battle with. That was the foundation of our new mobilization system. They also need faith in their equipment. I regard it as axiomatic that before any new weapon, idea or concept is introduced into a fighting force, those whose lives may depend on it must be shown how it works. Otherwise they will not trust it, which means they will misuse it. I laid down that the introduction of any weapon, idea or concept had to proceed in two phases. The first would be a full-scale experiment to test feasibility under battle conditions. I would attend, with our technical advisers. Several experiments might be needed to adapt the project to our needs. The next phase would be a series of demonstrations, again under battlefield conditions, for the benefit of all those involved in the new concept or device. I would also attend those. It meant our pace was deliberate. But the gain in understanding and confidence amply justified it.

Our innovations did not consist primarily of new weapons. We perhaps deployed portable anti-tank and anti-aircraft missles in greater profusion than the enemy had expected, but the weapons were well known. Our major innovations lay in training, technique and determination. I was nevertheless constantly looking for any device that might help us. Two examples come to mind.

In May 1973, the Syrian Chief of Staff, General Mustafa Talas, told me that one of his engineers had a design for a bridge that instead of just crossing the canal, would at the same time slope up to the top of the sand barrier—a sort of floating flyover. The engineer arrived in my office on May 30 for a meeting with myself, General

Gamal Ali, head of our engineers, and a director of the Timsah engineering company which then built the prototype. We got as far as experiments with it. But the disadvantages were insuperable. We abandoned work and let the engineer return to Syria on September 23, just three weeks before our offensive.

A more sophisticated device which only time prevented my using was a sensor which could detect concealed or underground objects from a high-altitude aircraft through minute changes in temperature. A prospecting device used by oil and mining companies, it operates on the principle that objects absorb and dissipate heat at different rates. Thus, an underground water or oil pipeline has a different heat profile than the earth it runs through, a tank in a hangar has a heat profile different from the hangar's, and so on. An Egyptian academic working at a midwestern university in the United States drew my attention to the sensor in a letter out of the blue in May 1973. After a passing tussle with our Defense Intelligence Department, who apparently suspected my informant of working for the CIA, I brought him to arrange a demonstration over a patch of desert carefully bare of any of our secrets. The device was marvelously sensitive, detecting from great heights temperature differences as low as 0.2 degrees. But by now it was August 1973 and I had no more time.

One weapon I did try to acquire was the hovercraft. It was on June 21, 1972 that, by invitation, I received a representative of the company. The types he could offer were undeniably impressive. One, I recall, could carry 17 tons at a speed of 60 knots. But, having been designed mainly for civilian use, none could do what I wanted. I stated my needs: "Could you provide one to transport

50 tons at 30 knots? I want speed, but the load is more important. I want a flying tank transporter." He replied: "Technically, I think we can do it. We'll study your requirement and let you know as soon as possible." He came back that September, with plans and a model. The company's design and performance specifications were all I had asked. But I needed five and, despite my strongest arguments, it was ruled that their price was beyond our reach. The project was shelved.

I wanted them, of course, to transport a small force of medium tanks over Timsah Lake and the Bitter Lakes to reinforce our much lighter amphibious force. I mention the project only because I am convinced that the hovercraft is destined to play an important role as a tank transporter in future conflicts.

* * *

The non-appearance of Egypt's much-heralded secret weapon, the Al Kahir missile, is a sordid tale, I regret to say. Al Kahir had been part of Egyptian folklore since word first leaked in the early 1960's that Egypt had its own short-range ballistic missile made in Egypt with the help of foreign technicians. Its range was said to be just over 100 miles. The authorities seemed pleased by the leak. Al Kahir missiles, trundling past on their long trucks, became an integral part of every military parade long before 1967. When we lost in 1967, of course, the questions started: "Where was Al Kahir?" No answers came.

Even as a general in the armed forces, I knew nothing about the weapon. But as Chief of Staff it became my responsibility to know. The responses to my initial inquiries so appalled me that I decided to uncover the

full story. I do not propose, here, to go into the shameful details—the wasted millions, the secret suspension of work, the deception thereafter by authorities afraid to admit the truth—though the Egyptian people must one day be told. I deal only with what confronted me. The missile had been written off, its technicians dispersed. The handful that had been constructed were in storage.

I ordered a test firing, which I attended on September 23, 1971. Al Kahir turned out to be very primitive indeed. Its maximum range was less than five miles, roughly that of a 120mm mortar. But unlike a mortar, Al Kahir was, at two-and-a-half tons, too heavy to be moved round the battlefield. It was also too inaccurate. Its range and direction could be controlled only by the tilt and alignment of its launching ramp. Even then, successive firings on the same elevation and bearing produced craters 900 yards apart (which meant that it could never be fired against an enemy closer than half-a-mile from our own lines). The only merit of Al Kahir was the size of those craters. In normal soil, they were 30 yards wide and more than 12 yards deep. Apart from the destructive power of its warhead, Al Kahir was medieval.

Al Kahir had a younger brother, Al Zafir, and that too was fired for me at the same demonstration. Smaller and lighter, it had an even shorter range; which meant that although it was marginally more accurate than Al Kahir it had still to be used with caution, particularly since our technical military college had developed a launcher to fire four at once.

Still, anything was better than nothing. I decided to deploy both, under new names. As Al Zeitoon, the smaller was moved to prepared positions over the three nights before D-Day. But deploying Al Kahir, renamed

Al Tin, presented problems. It was so large that, in theory, it should have had the range to reach Tel Aviv. If enemy reconnaissance aircraft spotted it, there really would be a full-scale alert. So we moved it up only on the night of October 5/6.

The war performance of both was predictably disappointing. That should have been the end of it. But on October 23 it was announced in Egypt that minutes before the ceasefire at 1900 hours the previous day, October 22, Al Kahir missiles had been launched at the enemy in the region of Deversoir. This was untrue. The three missiles we had fired were Soviet R-17Es, which the West knows as SCUDs. It depressed me that, even then, our politicians not merely could not admit the truth, but were still trying to bolster lies with other lies.

* * *

As preparations mounted, one concern diminished. By mid-1973 it was clear that our air defenses, a potential headache when I took over as Chief of Staff could, as I had counted on, provide the essential air umbrella over our troops, not only during the crossing but as they entrenched some miles east of the canal. The event that first demonstrated this I ordered in September 1971.

When I took over as Chief of Staff, the 1970 truce was still in force, although the Israelis did not respect it. Their aircraft continued to violate our airspace as they thought fit. But it was noticeable that their sorties—points of penetration, routes, altitudes, points of exit—were carefully mapped to steer clear of the SAM batteries investing our strategic targets. In particular, the ten-mile strip west of the canal from which we would mount our assault was free of enemy interference.

It was not free from reconnaissance, however. At intervals, the enemy would fly a Stratocruiser equipped with electronic detection gear down the length of the canal—but a careful two miles to the east, just out of range of our SAMs. I determined to stop this. In early September 1971, I gave General Mohammed Ali Fahmy, Air Defense Commander, permission to prepare an ambush. At 1511 hours on September 17, the reconnaissance aircraft fell in fragments less than two miles south of the Bitter Lakes. The enemy response came, predictably, the next day. It reassured us. We had guessed that they would try to knock out our SAM radars, which were set back some ten miles west of the canal by using SHRIKE air-to-ground missiles Israel obtained from the United States. We had devised electronic means of countering SHRIKE and were quite keen to test them. On September 18 Israel did as we had expected. The aircraft launched their missiles from six miles east of the canal. SHRIKE only has a range of ten miles. The missiles fell hopelessly short. Clearly, we were beginning to establish a *cordon sanitaire* east of the canal too.

The weak link remained our air force, as an encounter nine months later confirmed. On June 13, 1972, two enemy Phantoms penetrated our air space in the area of Ras-el-Esh (where there were no SAMs). Two of our MIG-21s took off from Mansurah air base and pursued the Phantoms out to sea, only to be ambushed by eight others. (I was informed afterwards that by the time the duty controller had spotted the impending ambush on his radar, it was too late to warn our pilots.) Six other MIGs were scrambled, but when they arrived the skies were empty.

I decided to stop that sort of fracas. I issued new instructions to the air force. When approaching enemy aircraft were detected, I ordered our interceptors were to be scrambled, but only to patrol designated areas. Chases outside those areas were not permitted, except as part of a tactical plan worked out beforehand. No air-to-air combat was to be accepted at unfavorable odds. When the enemy tried to repeat the same tactics in a penetration of our Red Sea district two days later on June 15, I was relieved to see that my orders were obeyed.

Next month, however, after the departure of our Soviet advisers the enemy probed to the canal once more; presumably to test whether, without those technicians, our defenses had collapsed. Their first attempt was their last. At 1645 hours on July 24, our missiles shot down the enemy intruder just over six miles east of the canal. After that, Israeli pilots regularly stayed a safe nine miles east.

I recall only two exceptions. On October 10, 1972, intruders approached the canal, this time in formation. Apparently the enemy was trying new electronic measures to jam our detection radars during their approach, and to jam our SAM fire-control radars while they launched their own air-to-ground missiles. Of the two missiles we launched, one hit. I felt sorry for the Israeli pilot, sacrificed for a technical exercise. The only other intrusion across the canal came eight months later. At 1612 hours on June 28, 1973, we shot down another Israeli aircraft. Long before the October assault, in other words, our air-defense was well established over the crucial strip six miles to the east of the canal.

We did need help after the Soviet departure, however. The Soviets had been flying about 30 percent of our

MIG-21s, operating about 20 percent of our SAMs and much of the supporting electronic equipment; in particular, the SMALTA and TAKAN jamming devices. They operated an electronic reconnaissance and jamming squadron, and also had some electronic gear we knew nothing about. But by the end of 1972, within five months of the Soviet departure, our SAM battalions had absorbed virtually all the Soviet tasks. The old problem had returned to the air force, however: a shortage of MIG pilots.

The solution occurred to me in March 1973, during the visit to Egypt of the Vice President of the Democratic Republic of Korea. On March 6, while escorting their Vice Minister of War, General Zang Zong, on a tour of the Suez front, I asked if they could support us—and give their pilots useful combat training—by sending even a squadron of men. I knew at that time that his country flew MIG-21s. After much political discussion, in April I went on an official visit to President Kim-il-Sung to finalize the plan. (My fascinating ten-day tour of that extraordinary republic, an inspiring example of what a small nation of the so-called Third World can achieve with its own resources is, alas, rather outside the scope of this memoir, as is my stopover in Peking.)

Korean pilots—all highly experienced, many with more than 2,000 hours—arrived in Egypt in June and were operating by July. Israel or her ally soon monitored their communications, of course, and on August 15 announced their presence. To my regret, our leadership would never confirm it. The Koreans were probably the smallest international military reinforcement in history: only 20 pilots, eight controllers, five interpreters, three

administrative men, a political advisor, a doctor and a cook. But their effect was disproportionate. They had two or three encounters with the Israelis in August and September and about the same number in the war. Their arrival was a heartwarming gesture. I mention the story here mainly to pay tribute to them and to apologize for the churlishness of our leadership in not also doing so.

The Crucial Factor

But whatever our weapons, our allies, our plans or our training, the ultimate determinant of success or failure in October would be morale. Of that I was certain.

Restoring the morale of a defeated army is hard enough under any circumstances, and is doubly so when no truthful inquest has been allowed into the reasons for defeat. After 1967, all was confusion. The political leadership blamed the armed forces; the high command discreetly put it about that the politicians bore the blame for denying our air force the first blow. (Personally, I thought we were heading for defeat even if we did strike first; and for that state of affairs both politicians and high command were to blame.) In their confusion and distress, the Egyptian people vented their feelings on the ordinary soldier. Anyone in uniform was ridiculed in the streets. Morale fell to near-suicidal levels.

By the time I took over as Chief of Staff, much had been restored. Even the War of Attrition had provided its victories. In August 1967, Egyptian commandos had defeated an Israeli force at Ras-el-Esh. That October, the *Eilat* had been sunk. Our commando raids into Sinai had achieved some success. The shooting-down of ten enemy

aircraft in July 1970 had been a tonic. But much remained to be done.

Morale is an intangible; it is the sum of hundreds of factors which we barely comprehend. But its core is self-confidence; and in the nurture of that, I am convinced, three elements outweigh all others. Every soldier must be given the chance to extend himself to the limits of his capacities, until he himself finds and recognizes those limits, and is proud of what he can do within them. (A soldier who does not know his limits will destroy himself and others with him.) A commander must know his men's limits and compare them with the enemy's to assess strengths and weaknesses. He must help his men by giving them the best his country can afford. He may then ask of them no less than their best—and no more. Finally, a soldier must be given confidence in his superiors. Confidence in their technical ability is, of course, essential; but more important is the soldier's confidence that his superiors respect, rather than exploit, him, and ask of him no hardship or sacrifice they do not ask of themselves.

The key to the first is knowledge. The keys to the second are companionship and mutual respect. The key to the third is example. In my 31 months as Chief of Staff, I tried unremittingly to spread knowledge. My papers tell me I had 26 of my monthly meetings with staff and field commanders down to division level. The last meeting was on September 22, 1973, only a fortnight before our assault. I ran 18 command exercises in the Liberation series. I issued 53 directives: 48 before the war, four during it, and the fifty-third after the cease-fire. (The first to be issued during the war was Directive 49: *War Experience in Dealing with Enemy Tanks.* I

issued it on October 15, the day after the battle in which we lost 250 tanks.) My last directive was issued on November 30, 1973. I wrote those eight pamphlets for the ordinary soldier. I arranged hundreds of demonstrations.[2] I even had GHQ scientific department circulate a monthly digest of the latest military inventions and research.

To help our men evaluate their own capacities against the background of this knowledge, I encouraged in every soldier I met—and especially among my staff and immediate subordinates—the habits of frankness, plain speaking and self-criticsm. (Unfortunately, it proved harder to instill these habits into my superiors, as the progress of the war was to demonstrate.)

As for companionship and mutual respect—the second keys—they cannot be ordered, they can only be earned. My task was to ordain circumstances that fostered them. Adventure training was one. It was aimed specifically at cementing ties between those thousands of young platoon and company commanders and their men. Sport was another. Sport had been suspended in the armed forces since 1967; one of my first orders as Chief of Staff was to resurrect it. I gave units and formations six months to train and choose their teams, and in January 1972 it started: a knockout athletic competition between all 14 commands that included football, volleyball, basketball, handball, boxing and swimming. Over 1,000 enthusiastic and emotional gatherings of officers and men resulted, at which the ice was broken, little or no ceremony was observed, and *esprit de corps* was rampant.

The last key is example. Looking back, my whole military career has in a sense been an effort to instill idealism

into my men; and that, like example, can only be set from the top. Soldiers judge a commander by what they see and feel of him: only if he passes that test will they then listen to him.

When I went as Commander of the Red Sea District in 1970-71, a general's villa was waiting for me. It was stupid. How could I then have demanded anything of anybody? I chose instead a dugout, six feet by twelve feet, one of the shelters our engineers had assigned to captains. No subordinate of mine ever complained of hardship.

As Chief of Staff, I used the symbol of the blood bank. The armed forces blood bank used to buy blood from soldiers. Inevitably, it was the poor who sold their blood. I found this disgusting. I stopped it, ordering instead that every soldier and every officer under 40 should, during his years of service, give two bottles of blood (as long as his blood test was satisfactory). I had a slogan: "Soldiers do not sell their blood. They offer it to their country." My own advanced years—I was 50—exempted me. But when the campaign opened on March 31, 1973, I thought it right to be first in line.

There is no magic to building an army. It merely needs commitment. I have described the guidelines I followed, the methods I adopted. By the eve of the October War I had no doubt that, if for once given the chance to fight on fair terms, the Egyptian soldier would prove to be one of the best in the world.

Budget

During this period of preparation I contacted the chief finance officer to find the exact cost of forming and

maintaining each unit in the armed forces. He was at a loss.

The Egyptian military budget is prepared according to function or specialization, and not according to total unit or department cost. For example, the food department will calculate expenses for food, while another department will calculate expenses for kitchen utensils and equipment; one department will budget for vehicles while another figures for fuel. Consequently, it was impossible to compare the cost of a squadron of fighter aircraft against a brigade of anti-air missiles, and as Chief of Staff, it was impossible to make careful decisions based on cost effectiveness.

The chief finance officer began the long and difficult task of retrieving the information I had asked for, however, as a preliminary step I requested to see how the budget was distributed proportionally among major requirements of the armed forces. The 1973 budget was distributed accordingly:

Salaries, food, accomodation	68%
Armament	13%
Technical support	9%
Fortifications	6%
Other items	4%
Total	100%

In a developed country in which arms access is limited only by what can be afforded, the usual sequence is to first determine a defense allotment and then decide how to best use it to serve the interests of the country. The first step is a political decision, the second step a military

one, yet each greatly influenced by the other and requiring cooperation between politicians and the military. In the case of Third World countries, the issues regarding the defense budget and access to arms are much more complicated. Arms supply is always controlled by the superpowers according to many factors, including the following: the balance of power between the two superpowers in the area; the technological capabilities of the country to absorb modern and sophisticated weapons; the wealth of the country and its capability to pay for the arms; and how far the country is bound by foreign policy not to use these weapons in a way that might be in contradiction with the interests of the arms supplier. Consequently, decision makers in the Third World countries have very little chance to choose the arms and weapons they really need.

On August 26, 1973 I attended a dinner party in honor of Colonel Moammar el Gaddafy who had arrived unexpectedly in Cairo. I was seated next to the Minister of Finance and Economy, Dr. Hegazy. During the course of the evening we discussed the problem of the military budget. As it turned out, Dr. Hegazy's doctorate was in the type of budget preparation we so desperately needed, and he was enthusiastic about helping to find a solution. Following the dinner party, however, events moved quickly toward D-Day, and unfortunately, we were never able to resolve the problems of the Egyptian military budget.

Chapter Four: Political Diary

Sadat Seizes Power

Sadat came to power by mere chance. President Nasser, before he died, had not intended to leave the reins of government in Sadat's hands, but Nasser's sudden death upset all his expectations for succession. Sadat had served 18 years under Nasser. During this period, he was nothing more than a yes man to anything Nasser would say, and therefore he survived. In 1969, about a year before Nasser's death, he appointed Sadat as Vice President. Of course, Nasser, being the strong man of Egypt and the Arab world, would not appoint any Vice President who would create a menace to his absolute authority. It is rumored that on September 28, 1970, feeling he was about to die, Nasser quickly gave instructions to Sami Sharaf (Minister for Presidential Affairs) that Zakaria Mohyeddin should be appointed as First Vice President and an announcement was to be made immediately over the radio. Things went faster than he expected, and he died

the same day without the presidential decree being published. It is said that Sami Sharaf, together with Sharawy Goma, the Minister of Interior, were eager to seize power after the death of Nasser and thought it would be better for them to deal with a weak rather than a strong president. They did not disclose or announce Nasser's decision to appoint Zakaria Mohyeddin as First Vice President while they were watching the dying man. Thus, through his demonstrated weakness, and through the support of Sami Sharaf and Sharawy Goma—who both had considerable political power in the Arab Socialist Union, the only political party in Egypt—Sadat became President of Egypt on October 15, 1970.

For his first seven months as president, Sadat was a man without any real power. He was exactly the kind of president Sami Sharaf and Sharawy Goma wanted him to be. Yet on May 13, 1971, Sadat carried out a military coup and arrested all his political rivals, including Sami Sharaf and Sharawy Goma. His coup was carried out and supported by both General L. Nassef, Commander of the Presidential Bodyguard, and by General M. A. Sadek, who was then the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces. It is only since then that one can really say that Sadat had seized power.

* * *

October 19, 1970: A meeting of the commanders of the armed forces, chaired for the first time by President Sadat. The new President praises his predecessor and pledged to follow the policies of Nasser. (See Appendix: Comments on Sadat's Conferences.)

December 30: Another commanders conference chaired by Sadat. A long survey of the situation from the Minister

of War, General Mohammed Fawzi. Sadat spoke briefly. When the ceasefire expired on February 7, 1971, he said there would be no further extension. He asked that the armed forces be prepared to resume action. We should be ready to fight with the means at hand, he said, without waiting for more or better. He concluded: "Do not believe the American and Israeli propaganda, which says that our relationship with the Soviet Union is bad. They want it to be bad, but it is not."

March 23, 1971: The President called a general meeting of senior oficers from all commands. I and four others represented Red Sea District.

He began by trying to explain why he had, after all, extended the ceasefire on February 4. Egypt had taken the diplomatic initiative, he said. He gave no details, but claimed Egypt had isolated Israel from the world community—he mentioned the United States, Britain and the European Economic Community, Spain and Iran! We could not risk these international gains by rejecting an extension of the ceasefire when Israel had already accepted one. Not that the world would be fooled, he said. Israel had informed the United Nations Secretary General on February 21 that they would never withdraw to their 1967 borders. Their aggressive and expansionist attitude was revealed to all. He distributed copies of a map of Sinai, divided by a line running south from a point west of Rafah (the Egyptian frontier) to a point west of Sharm-el-Sheikh. Israel, the President said, claimed to be ready to evacuate west of that line but insisted on annexing the territory to the east. (See Map One and Appendix: Comments on Sadat's Conferences.)

Sadat attacked the United States: "We have no faith in

America. I have written to Nixon, telling him we put no trust in his country's promises but judge it instead by its actions." He also chastised other Arab countries for playing politics with the Palestinian cause. He singled out Algeria and President Boumedienne: "He has sold himself to the Americans, politically and economically. He has just signed a contract with American companies to supply petroleum and liquefied gas for decades to come. His economy will be absolutely tied to America's."

April 18: An historic meeting of the Armed Forces Supreme Council (AFSC). Chairman: War Minister Fawzi. As Commander of the Red Sea District I was not a member of the Armed Forces Supreme Council, but I was summoned. The topic was the newly announced Union of Arab Republics between Egypt, Libya and Syria.

Fawzi began by saying he had been told officially of the Union only hours before it had been given to the papers. He remained uncertain of the reasons for it: "Our relations with Syria are already very good. The Syrian Armed Forces are already under my command; and it is already agreed that they will operate in the future in full coordination with Egypt's." Fawzi implied strongly, in other words, that he disagreed with the Union, and he ended by claiming that the Chief of Staff, General Mohammed Sadek, was in total agreement with him.

Fawzi then said he wanted each of us to give our views. He was going to what he described as "a political meeting at the highest level," where he was supposed to transmit the opinion of the armed forces. Clearly, he meant a meeting of the Supreme Executive Committee of the Arab Socialist Union. From his tone, it also seemed

clear that the great majority, perhaps all, of that committee was also against the Union and had been as surprised as Fawzi by it. So the new President had acted without discussion with the country's political leadership. Fawzi, using well-covered and well-chosen words, was in fact asking the Armed Forces Supreme Council to choose between the President and the Arab Socialist Union, with the winner taking political power.

There were 16 of us, counting Fawzi and our minute-taker, the ministry's Secretary General, Brigadier Amir el Nazer. I was twelfth in seniority. As Fawzi, skipping Sadek, began his canvass in order of seniority, I engaged myself in noting the views of my colleagues and superiors. To my astonishment the nine before me all attacked the Union, the only variation being the harshness of their condemnation. Whatever we remaining said, in other words, the majority vote had already been cast. A fine excuse to run for cover, I reflected.

But I supported the Union and I proceeded to say so, arguing its positive side—another attempt to foster the Arab unity we all professed to want—and rejecting most of the previous speaker's arguments as contrary to common sense. One clause in the treaty of the Union, for instance, gave any two signatories the right to intervene militarily to topple a future regime in the third if it were hostile to the Union. I argued, contrary to the others, that it was Libya which ought to fear this, not Egypt, since in no way could Libya or Syria invade Egypt, whereas Libya could never withstand an Egyptian assault.

When a grievous speaker heckled me, Fawzi silenced him. I was grateful for the assistance, but I did not confuse courtesy with conviction. When the others spoke,

all against the Union, I felt even more isolated. Fawzi closed the meeting, delighted: "I can see that all of you except General Shazly are against this Union. I will express your views to the meeting I am going to attend."

Suddenly the officer who had heckled me said: "We have not heard General Sadek's view. Before we break up, let us hear it." Fawzi looked at Sadek, sitting on his right, and asked him to speak. Sadek, befitting a former director of the Defense Intelligence Department was a wary, suspicious man. There were two points which worried him, he said. The first was that the Soviet Union supported the Union; he did not see the logic of that. The second was the inclusion of Syria, despite the bad experience of Egypt's first attempt at a union in 1958. But for those, he said, he would have supported the pact! The heckler intervened once more, brusquely repeating his demand to know Sadek's view—"yes or no." Sadek said he was against it. I was alone.

The meeting broke up around 2200 hours. Next day I drove back to my Red Sea HQ, braced for the worst in the storm that was coming. It never crossed my mind that, a month later, I would be driving back to Cairo to take up the job of Chief of Staff of the Egyptian Armed Forces.

* * *

Much is still hidden about what happened in those intervening weeks. On May 2, Vice President Ali Sabry, one of Sadat's main political opponents, was dismissed. Eight days later I was called to Cairo for another meeting of senior commanders.

May 11: I had been told War Minister Fawzi was to chair it. Instead I found the President. It was his fourth

meeting with senior commanders since he took office; and it was noticeable how his tone this time differed from his previous approach. Now his speech was full of "I," even the occasional "we." He was more confident, more assertive, constantly challenging a group he referred to but never identified.

Sadat revealed details of the diplomatic initiative he had claimed at his March 23 meeting: "On February 4, I proposed a new initiative in two phases. The first phase would entail the reopening of the canal, with Israel's withdrawal from Sinai as far as El Arish. That phase should last no more than six months. It would be followed at once by the second phase, which would entail the total withdrawal of Israel." He went on: "At my recent meeting with United States Secretary of State William Rogers I told him my terms for reopening the canal were unnegotiable. Our troops must cross the canal and take up a defensive line to the east, to secure navigation in the canal. And in the absence of a final settlement, the ceasefire would be for a limited period only. Rogers told me he could ask nothing more from Egypt, because we had gone so far there was nothing more to ask of us. So I asked him to answer one fundamental question: Does America support Israel in its occupation of our land, or does it only guarantee Israel's survival within its own borders?" All these points, Sadat added, had been in a formal paper handed to Rogers.

The President then described Israel's response, which he said had been conveyed to him by the United States Assistant Secretary for Near-Eastern Affairs, Joseph Sisco. One, Israel had asked whether their vessels would pass throught the canal as soon as it reopened, or remain prohibited until Israeli withdrawal was complete? Two,

Israel's withdrawal would be proportional to the length of the ceasefire. Three, Israel categorically rejected an Egyptian military presence east of the canal, but did agree to some police and administrators. Four, Egyptian troops west of the canal should also be thinned out. Five, Israel rejected complete withdrawal to the lines of June 4, 1967. Six, the Knesset would have to discuss and approve any final draft agreement.

The armed forces, President Sadat said, deserved praise for supporting the foreign policy of the country. The latest American effort to find a solution had been forced by the military might of Egypt and its determination to establish its leading role in the Arab world. (He spoke of his plans to strengthen the air force. He would sleep comfortably, he said, only when we had a thousand operational pilots.)

Relations with the Soviet Union, the President insisted, were excellent. The Soviets would be building us $460 million worth of industrial projects over the next five years. These would help us lay the economic base which was the foundation of political independence.

It was a speech of honeyed words. Looking back, I still cannot decide if the President believed any of them, or was just trying to gain time. For things moved fast after that. On May 13 it was announced that the majority of of the Supreme Executive Committee of the Arab Socialist Union, key members of its Central Committee and several ministers, including Fawzi, had resigned. By May 15 all these political opponents of Sadat were under arrest. He was undisputed ruler.

Behind him stood three men. General Sadek, promptly elevated from Chief of Staff to Minister of War and

Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces. General Leithy Nassef, Commander of the Presidential Guard, with one armored and one infantry brigade at his personal command. And Mamdouh Salem, a policeman whose career had been confined to the *couleirs* of the security services. Was Sadat's seizure of power a military coup? Or a political coup carried out with the consent of the armed forces? If the latter, who had claimed to represent those forces, since on April 18 the Armed Forces Supreme Council had supported the Arab Socialist Union *against* the President?

In copious speeches and now in his memoirs Sadat has given us his version of the events. His jailed opponents have had no such opportunity. That is the way under an autocratic regime. Nor even, have his three key supporters had their say. On August 30, 1973, General Nassef died in a mysterious accident in London. General Sadek, dismissed in October 1972, became himself the target of savage denunciation. Mamdouh Salem, promoted Minister of the Interior after the coup, rose to Prime Minister in October 1975 and became party leader in 1977. He was dismissed from both in October 1978.

On May 16, I was summoned to Cairo to find myself Chief of Staff, selected over the heads of more than 30 senior generals. Next day I met the President, with General Sadek, at his home. I was there for more than two hours, discussing purely military topics. In words I subsequently had occasion to recall, the President said he had total confidence in my abilities. Was I chosen for my support of the Armed Forces Supreme Council? If that were so, surely the others would have been dismissed or, at least, transferred to less sensitive posts? Nothing of

the sort happened. Only the officer who had clashed with General Sadek was dismissed from the armed forces.

Dealing with the Russians

Without the help of the Soviet Union our battle would have been impossible. I make no judgment for or against the Soviet Union, its ideology, power structure or social system. I state a fact. No other country or group of countries simultaneously could and would have supplied Egypt with the arms in the profusion and sophistication needed to combat Israel.

It is a question of capacity *plus* will. Only a superpower could have had the development and manufacturing capacity. Of the superpowers, only the Soviet Union had the will. (Western Europe might have had the weapons, but probably not the production runs and certainly not the concerted will.) Nor would anyone else have granted us the Soviet credit terms. In my view, that remains the case. The Soviet Union was, and in my view is, the best available ally for an Egypt bent upon liberating its lost territory.

Precisely that fact led to the first of the perennial problems in our relationship with the Soviet Union. As a monopoly supplier, the Soviets could and did control their release of arms to us: the weapons, the amounts and the dates of delivery.

Their reasons were obvious enough. As a superpower, the Soviet Union had its own concerns. For example, the Soviets always made it clear that while supporting Egypt and the Arab cause they in no way countenanced the destruction of Israel. Another superpower concern,

unspoken but unmistakable, was not to escalate the arms race in the Middle East to the point of confrontation with the United States. Through control of the arms supply, in other words, the Soviet Union sought to influence, though they could not direct, the course of events in the Middle East. Their final concern, one scarcely peculiar to superpowers though easier for them to attain, was to seek from their alliance with us particular points of advantage in the struggle with their rival superpower.

Egypt's concerns were equally obvious: to get the weapons we needed as fast and as cheaply as possible, and free from strings—with the freedom, that is, to use them as we saw fit. We had no interest in seeing either superpower establish hegemony over the Arab world. But, as a mark of our alliance and because the Arab world's wider interest lay in a balance between the superpowers, we were prepared to offer the Soviet Union facilities in Egypt which assisted them in their struggle with the United States, so long as those facilities in no way impinged upon our own freedom of action.

I would be less than honest if I did not add that while those political concerns were one determinant of Egypt's relations with the Soviet Union, the Russian character was the other. The Russians have many qualities, but concern for human feelings is not among them. They are brusque, harsh, frequently arrogant and usually unwilling to believe anyone has anything to teach them. They were, I think the losers as a result. They would, for instance, launch into criticisms of our way of life: "You ask the Soviet Union to supply you with arms on soft loans while great numbers of your people live luxurious lives with several cars and quantities of jewels. They

have no conception that Egypt is at war. Why aren't you mobilizing all your resources for the struggle, as we did in the Great Patriotic War or as the British did?" Much of what they said may have been justified. But predictably, the Egyptian leadership not only rejected such remarks but saw them as attempts to spread communism and even as a prelude to the overthrow of the regime, which only made relations harder.

Through my time as Chief of Staff, the urgency of our need for arms—our battle to push the Soviets into supplying us on a bigger scale than ever before—was the dominant theme of our relationship. But it was the Soviet's wider ambitions against the United States which confronted us first.

May 19, 1971, 2000 hours: A Soviet delegation of three—General Yefimov (Air Force), Admiral Vassily (Navy), and General Vasily Okunev (Chief Soviet Adviser in Egypt)—met an Egyptian team of General Sadek, myself and Brigadier Amir el Nazer. The Soviet Navy already had facilities at Alexandria and at Port Said. The delegation had come to ask for more.

At Alexandria they wanted a building or complex of buildings to house the 200 Soviet military families now scattered around the town. They suggested the San Stefano Hotel. Their plans for Mersa Matrouh were more ambitious. They wanted to deepen the port by 24 feet, and to build or rent quarters nearby to house 160 families and 2,000 single personnel. They wanted to expand Mersa Matrouh airport to take a Soviet fighter brigade and an air defense brigade. And they wanted to build two radar stations: one 50 miles to the west, the other 50 miles to the east.

Sadek at once told them their requests were political rather than military and he could give no decision. He would consult the President and reply within a week. After the Russians had left, Sadek asked me to head a committee to study the request.

My committee included the Air Force Commander, General Ahmed Baghdady, and the Naval Commander, General Mahmoud Fahmy. After a few days we suggested a compromise. We should grant the Soviet Mediterranean fleet facilities at Mersa Matrouh comparable to those already given at Alexandria and Port Said. But we should assign no separate facility or area that might approximate a base. And a Soviet air brigade should be allowed to base at Mersa Matrouh only if its mission were to defend not merely Soviet facilities but all Egyptian air space from Alexandria to the Libyan frontier. The brigade should come under the control of Egypt's high command and be relieved as soon as our own air force had enough pilots. Sadek returned to say the President concurred and suggested an agreement for five to ten years.

May 25-28: Soviet President Podgorny arrived in Cairo.

May 27: The two delegations met again. This time the Soviet team was headed by General Pavlovsky, who was accompanying Podgorny.

Pavlovsky told us, to our astonishment, that it had been Sadat himself, with the former War Minister Fawzi, who had suggested during Sadat's last visit to Moscow in March that the Soviet fleet use Mersa Matrouh. Their proposals, Pavlovsky said, flowed from that. To defend their ships they needed an air force brigade. That needed a base. To defend the base, they needed an air defense brigade. To protect the whole, they needed radar. So the

Soviets stuck to their request. We presented our compromise.

We met again the next day, May 28, but by the time Pavlovsky had to depart with Podgorny we still had not reached an agreement. I found it faintly ironic that while we were disagreeing, Sadat and Podgorny were signing a new treaty of friendship and cooperation. But primarily I was alarmed that the President should apparently have offered so much in Moscow without telling anyone, and then left us to beat the retreat.

June 3: The President's first meeting with the Armed Forces Supreme Council since his coup. He announced there had been a "secret organization" in the centers of power in Egypt. It had been headed by Ali Sabry, and it had been planning to get rid of him. Key members of the organization were General Fawzi; Amin Huwaidi, Minister of State; Sharawy Goma, Interior Minister; Sami Sharaf, who headed the presidential office; and Magdy Hassanein, Egyptian Ambassador to Czechoslavakia, considered to be one of the left wing members of the Arab Socialist Union. The organization, he said in answer to a question later, had been Nasser's idea: "A tightly-selected group infiltrated the Arab Socialist Union at every level from the grassroots to the top, without announcement or publicity. Those who wanted to inherit the mantle of Gamal Abdel Nasser had planned to distribute weapons to this secret organization to impose their will on the people by force. Luckily we put our hands on all the weapons before they could be distributed."

The President turned to his plans: "Let none of you be in doubt about our strategy. I can summarize it in two

points. The first is to keep and strengthen our relations with the Soviet Union until we have built a modern and powerful country both economically and militarily. Zionism is an aggressive wave, just like the Crusades. Like them it will flow for decades. Our friendship with the Soviet Union gives us the strength and support to repulse that wave. The second point of our strategy is Arab unity. We shall move steadily and consistently in the directions dictated by those two goals."

Sadat described his meetings with President Podgorny: "During our talks with the Soviet delegation, they never referred to our internal affairs. When I was alone with President Podgorny, he asked me simply why I had chosen that particular time, May 2, to dismiss Ali Sabry. I told him I made the decision to dismiss him a few days before the arrival of Rogers on May 4. Having done so, I did not want to postpone acting upon it until after Rogers' visit, in case the dismissal appeared the price of some agreement with the Americans. So I decided to get rid of him at once. You know what Podgorny said? 'Brezhnev, Kosygin and I came up with precisely that explanation.' "

The President was asked about rumors, clearly stemming from loose gossip about the Mersa Matrouh, that the Soviet Union was seeking bases in Egypt. "That is not true," he replied. "I am not giving bases to anyone. Let me tell you one more thing. During Rogers' last visit, I told him I was planning a new air force academy and the Russians would help me run it. But I also told Rogers that if the Israeli occupation were imposed on us, or if anyone tried to force us to acquiesce in it, I would rethink about our non-alignment. The Americans know that we are masters in our own country."

But could we get the equipment, he was asked, the questioner clearly referring to the fact that the Soviets always seemed readier to supply defensive than offensive weapons. "When we plan the offensive," the President said, "I want us to plan within our capabilities, nothing more. Cross the canal and hold even ten centimeters of Sinai, I'm exaggerating, of course, and that will help me greatly and alter completely the political situation both internationally and within Arab ranks." (See Appendix: Comments on Sadat's Conferences.)

The Search for Allies

The October War saw the widest Arab cooperation against the common enemy since 1948. The three front-line states—Egypt, Syria, Jordan—of course collaborated. (The Jordanian front itself remained calm, but Jordan reinforced the Syrian front with one armored brigade on October 13, one week after the outbreak of war, and another armored brigade a week later. And no fewer than eight non-front-line Arab states also sent forces to the battle. The contributions were not always without problems, as we shall see. There are lessons we must learn. But it showed what could be done. The planning for this, too, had begun long before the war.

June 30, 1971: In a ceremony at the Arab League headquarters in Cairo, I took the oath as Assistant Secretary General of the Arab League for Defense (ASGALD). As such, I became coordinator of the Chiefs of Staff in all Arab countries.

The Arab Collective Defense Council (ACDC) was established by the Arab Collective Defense Treaty that

was signed in 1950. The treaty is open to any Arab country that would like to join, although doing so is not obligatory in any way. All Arab countries are now members. As a firm believer in reconnaissance, I set about my new task by studying the treaty and the minutes and supporting documents of all eleven meetings so far held by the Defense Council. I emerged with four impressions, all discouraging.

First, the collective help which the front-line states asked of their Arab brothers at the Arab Collective Defense Council meetings was always financial, nothing more. Second, the Arab Collective Defense Council, having heard trenchant and enthusiastic speeches in favor of mutual aid, invariably passed powerful resolutions. But third, these were never regarded as binding, so they were almost never acted upon. Having made some stirring decisions, the delegates of virtually every state, especially those supposed to give the aid, would plead that final approval lay with their highest authorities back home. In practice that approval never materialized. The reality remained that what little financial support was forthcoming had to be drummed up by the front-line heads of state or their foreign ministers touring the Arab world with begging bowls. What they got depended on no more than their own bargaining ability and the mood of the other ruler.

Finally, I concluded that the most successful, which is to say productive, meetings of the Arab Collective Defense Council, indeed any Arab League committee, were those attended by heads of state. The fact is that whether Arab states call themselves monarchies, republics or sheikhdoms, real power resides in the hands of the head of state.

My next step was to ask: if there is no truly collective Arab defense program, what efforts do Arab states individually make? Taking United Nations' 1970 figures, I studied defense expenditure against national income throughout the Arab world and compared the figures with each other and with those for Israel. The comparisons shocked me.

The Arab world, with a population of 110 million, generated a gross national product of $26 billion. Israel, with a population of three million, had a gross national product of $3.6 billion. Averaged across the Arab world, per capita annual income was $236; in Israel it was $1,300. Facing that discrepancy, the Arabs could surely afford no waste. They had little choice, as I saw it, but to coordinate their efforts. The reality revealed by their defense budgets was vastly different. Those Arab states, no matter how poor, which happened to border Israel were devoting a far higher proportion of their gross national product to defense than were other far richer Arab countries who had the good fortune to find themselves far from the front. Egypt, its per capita income a mere $203 a year, was pouring 21.1 percent of its gross national product into defense, while vastly richer Arabs gave less than three percent.

It seemed to me that we stood little chance of truly mobilizing Arab resources for collective action against Israeli expansionism until the burdens were shared more equitably. I drafted a plan whereby, the richer the country, the more it would devote to Arab defense. The percentage of gross national product each country allotted to defense would vary according to its annual per capita income: 10 percent of the gross national product for those countries with per capita incomes lower than $200

a year; 15 percent for those with incomes up to $500; 20 percent for those with incomes of $500–$1,000; 25 percent for those with incomes of $1,000–$2,000; and 30 percent for those over $2,000. An Arab defense fund should be set up to handle the Arab world's total defense allocations (contributed on my suggested basis). The global sum should be distributed among members, with at least half going to the front-line states. Any country, of course, would then be free to allocate more from its own budget for defense if it wished.

A utopian dream. When I floated even the broad outline of the project unofficially round the Arab League, I found it so unacceptable that it would have been inadvisable even to broach it officially. At my first meeting with the other Arab Chiefs of Staff, shortly after taking up my job, I nevertheless insisted upon going, figure by figure, through the tables of income versus defense expenditure and calling their attention to the disparities, though regretfully, without suggesting any plan to remove them.

If a radical solution to the problem of Arab military cooperation was thus impossible, my task, it seemed to me, remained the same. What other ways could be found to mobilize Arab forces for the coming battle?

The October Arms Deal

But first we had to settle a more fundamental question: what sort of battle?

July 6-7, 1971: I was visiting naval units and bases in Alexandria, accompanied by several members of the Armed Forces Supreme Council. The full Armed Forces Supreme Council was to meet in Cairo on July 8, so I

judged it convenient for those of us in Alexandria to have a preliminary session. On July 7 we met in the Alexandria naval college. I outlined my views on our realistic offensive options in the light of the limitations imposed on us by our weakness in the air. A good number of those present seemed convinced.

July 8: The full Armed Forces Supreme Council meeting. War Minister Sadek in the chair. The first clash between Sadek and myself over our ideas for Egypt's offensive. Our rival views I have outlined in Chapter Two. General Sadek's thinking, as he argued it at the meeting, was: "Let us define the optimum possible goal, whether or not we have the means. Then let us concentrate on gaining the means to achieve that goal." I countered that this might befit a superpower, or a country with unlimited support and guarantees from a superpower. We had neither. We could not control the means. So we had to act within the means we could reasonably expect to have.

The military decision hinged upon a political judgment, in other words. What arms could we expect from the Soviets?

There was no vote at the meeting. Sadek decided that a modest offensive with the passes as our final target would be prepared and a listing of necessary weapons and equipment was to be calculated by those present. This was actually the birth of Operation 41. Sadek and I continued our discussion, however, outside the council meeting until I was able to convince him to proceed with The High Minarets, somewhere on or about July 15. Which explains why the ultimate outcome of this and subsequent meetings was, as I described in Chapter Two,

a secret compromise: Operation 41, the drive to cross the canal and seize the Sinai passes in a single operation, to be drawn up in collaboration with our Soviet advisers. Meanwhile The High Minarets, limited to holding a bridgehead across the canal, to be planned in extreme secrecy and based upon our estimate of the very minimum equipment we could expect to have. As the planning of Operation 41 reached a crucial point, however, another aspect of superpower politics intruded.

The first week of September: The Randopolo Affair. Our intelligence services had uncovered an American espionage ring. The principals were Tanashi Randopolo, an Egyptian of Greek parentage, and a Miss Swain Harris of the United States mission in Cairo.

Randopolo gave a complete confession, naming his sources among the Russians on Ganaklis air base outside Alexandria. His good friend Mr. Belekov had served there from May 1969 to March 1971 and then sent his replacement, Mr. "Victor" with a letter of introduction to Randopolo. Victor's assistant, Mr. "Yuri," had been equally close. Victor and Yuri had been to Randopolo's for dinner; Randopolo dined at the base so often he had the run of the Russian's private quarters. He had even been in the audience for a Soviet instructional film warning against spies. He had been all through the new concrete blast hangars, the first of their kind in the world. And he was quite *au fait* with base gossip: the fact that the Soviet radar there was not the best they had; what sorts of SAMs guarded which Soviet bases; the Soviet view of Egyptian capabilities. A useful spy.

September 6: With that buzzing about us, we had our conference to discuss the list of arms and equipment

necessary to Operation 41 that GHQ had compiled, with the assistance of our Soviet advisers. Myself, Baghdady (Air Force); General Mohammed Ali Fahmy (Air Defense); General Mamdouh Tuhamy (Chief of Operations); General Omar Gohar (Chief of Organization)—the inner core of GHQ were present. We agreed on the formidable list and I delivered it to Sadek.

September 12: On the President's orders, I called in General Shvartz, Assistant Chief Soviet Adviser (General Okunev, Chief Soviet Adviser, was out of town), to relate what we had learned about Soviet security from the Tanashi Randopolo case. "What Randopolo told Harris will no doubt find its way to Israel," I said. "But to avoid damaging our friendship with the Soviet Union, the President has decided to close the case. We trust that, as friends, the Soviets will instruct their personnel to exercise more vigilance to avoid such entanglements in the future. We leave to you what action you take against the personnel already involved."

Shvartz promised immediate steps. Next day he told me all were to be sent home. As for Miss Swain Harris, the President ordered her release within days. Only Tanashi Randopolo was left to pay the full price.

September 21: General Abdel Khader Hassan, Vice Minister of War, flew to Moscow for preliminary negotiations for an arms deal based upon the requirements of Operation 41 and valued at 130 million rubles, approximately $195 million.[3] With Hassan, who was always the Egyptian representative in these negotiations with the Soviets, went our Chief of Organization, General Omar Gohar.

October 8: The negotiations had gone well. General

Sadek flew to Moscow to sign the deal, returning on October 16.

October 17: A conference of senior commanders to discuss the deal. Sadek in the chair. The Soviet Union is to supply:

—10 TU-16 bombers with air-to-surface missiles (ASM) capable of hitting ground targets almost 95 miles away;

—100 MIG-21FMs. 50 before the end of the year;

—20 MIG-23s, to be supplied during 1972 with Soviet pilots until they can be replaced by Egyptians;

—one brigade of QUADRAT, the mobile SAM known in the West as SAM-6;

—one 180mm artillery battalion;

—one 240mm mortar battalion;

—three PMP bridges.

On top of this the Soviets had agreed to massive assistance to Egypt's own armaments industry. They would help us produce:

—the D-30 120mm gun;

—the 23mm twin-barrel, anti-aircraft gun;

—the AKM automatic rifle;

—the RPG anti-tank rocket launcher;

—plus assistance with an enormous ammunition production program of our own: 23mm for the anti-aircraft gun; 82mm for the B-10 rocket launcher; 120mm mortar ammunition; 122mm for the M-30 gun; the same caliber for the D-30; 130mm for the M-46; 152mm for the howitzer; projectiles for the RPG; and RKG hand grenades.

The Soviets themselves will bear the burden of constructing factories in Egypt to supply certain other equipment and spares: a factory for spares for the MIG-17,

MIG-21 and SU-7; a factory to make drop tanks; one to produce B-15 radars; another to make the R-123 and R-124 tank radios.

On operational matters the Soviet Defense Minister, Marshal Andrei Grechko, has agreed to an Egyptian request that the Soviet fighter squadrons already based in Egypt should share our air defense as far east as a boundary 12 miles from the Egyptian-Israeli lines. (The local Soviet commander had wanted to keep his operations west of the 32nd degree of longitude.)

Sadek told us he had asked the Soviets to manufacture the MU-24 helicopter in Egypt too. The politicians turned down the request, but Grechko told him privately he would reconsider the point later.

November 4: The President called a conference of the inner circle of his military advisers: Sadek, myself, Hassan (Vice Minister), Baghdady (Air Force), Fahmy (Air Defense), Nassef (Presidential Guard), plus Okunev, (Chief Soviet Adviser.) The President had three announcements:

ONE: He had held a meeting of the National Security Council the day before and ordered it to mobilize all the country's resources behind the forthcoming assault.

TWO: He was immediately assuming the title of Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces.

THREE: On November 11 he was proposing to declare that he withdraw his February 4 peace initiative, in which he had offered to re-open the canal under certain conditions.

He turned to General Okunev. "For your information," he said, "I have informed the Americans that we are going to enter Sinai even if we only have rifles." In response, Okunev could offer three items of news. The TU-16s

would soon arrive with their training teams; the Soviets would start training our pilots and navigators at once. Marshal Grechko, Soviet Defense Minister, was asking that the personnel of our QUADRAT brigade be trained in the Soviet Union, because facilities could not be set up in Egypt. (The President at once replied that he would like the training to be in Egypt; any obstacles we would work to overcome. The point was not settled. Okunev had to report back to Moscow.) Finally, Okunev said he had received from the Soviet Union a complete satellite reconnaissance film of Sinai. This would be put at our disposal.

The President wound up by ordering Sadek to prepare a permanent office for him in the Ministry of War, so he could call at GHQ at any time. A suite was swiftly organized on the first floor, complete with a private lift because of the President's weak heart. (See Appendix: Comments on Sadat's Conferences.)

November 19: The President called a conference at Inshas air base with Sadek, myself, Baghdady, Nassef, General Husni Mubarak (Air Force Chief of Staff, which places him second in command after General Baghdady), plus Okunev and Soviet Ambassador to Egypt, Vladimir Vinogradov.

President Sadat: "Donald Bergus [the U.S. State Department official in charge of United States' interests in Egypt] met me yesterday. I told him the following: My experience so far with you Americans makes it impossible for me to put any confidence in you. I take an initiative to re-open the canal. Now you try to subvert it into some new deal, some initiative that will benefit only Israel. The Americans had previously asked me whether, if Israel did withdraw as my initiative stipulated, it would be possible to

prolong the [six-month] ceasefire. I had answered yes it could be extended in three monthly installments for a maximum of a year. Yesterday I withdrew all that. Bergus asked me: 'Shall I inform Washington that you have no confidence in us and will not deal with us again unless Israel answers Ambassador Jarring's questionnaire?' " I said: "Yes."

"Mr. Bergus then said to me: 'We know you now have the new TU-16 capable of launching supersonic missiles. That weapons system is designed principally against ships. The United States is therefore deeply concerned. We have no choice but to see the introduction of this weapon as a significant factor in the balance of power between us and the Soviet Union in the region.' "

"I told Bergus, I am not about to declare war on the United States. But you must understand that strikes against the interior of Egypt will now be met by strikes against the interior of Israel. Instead of expressing concern, you should be ashamed of yourselves. You supply Israel with Phantoms with which they strike our heartland. But when I get a weapon to hit back, then and only then do you express concern. Why?"

The President went on: "Now the Americans have called General Dayan to Washington. No doubt they will tell him all about our TU-16. My one concern is that the enemy might launch a surprise attack when he learns. For that reason, I request the Soviet Union to supply us with reconnaissance over Sinai and Israel by M-500 and by satellite."

The Air Force Commander, Baghdady, had at one point broken into the President's address to voice his fears that the TU-16 missiles were valueless. His chief technical adviser had apparently told him their maximum speed

was only 750 miles per hour. In his view, anything slower than Mach Two was of little use. General Okunev replied that Baghdady's information was wrong and gave the true performance figures. (I see no reason to reveal a friendly power's military secrets, so I omit them here.) Okunev added, however, that the problem lay in training. The TU-16 navigators needed 500 hours.

Now Baghdady raised another problem: "The 50 MIG-21 MFs we were promised [in October] during 1971 will need three months to be prepared for the battle, so we trust they will arrive as soon as possible. Nor is the workshop for their engine maintenance ready. We hope the Soviet Union will take immediate action to finish it."

The President turned to the Soviet Ambassador: "I request your excellency to ask the Soviet leadership to send what we have agreed upon as soon as possible, and to let us know the expected dates of arrival. I would also like work on the aircraft factory and the maintenance workshop accelerated."

Our relationship with the Soviet Union had never seemed more fruitful. The October deal would give us the arms we needed. The Soviet representatives in Egypt were clearly anxious to smooth any problems. Feeling confident, I left the conference to accompany the President on a tour of the troops—the special forces and units of the Second Army that same day; then, after a night in Ismailia, we drove on to see units of the Third Army, returning to Cairo on November 20.

It was time to look to our other allies, the Arab states around us. From November 21-26, I met Chiefs of Staff of all the Arab armed forces, to prepare the ground for my first meeting with the Arab Collective Defense Council at the end of November. What I did not anticipate was

that this Arab Collective Defense Council meeting, besides being crucial in our search for reinforcements, would mark also the opening of the rift between General Sadek and myself.

Apparatus of Power

When Marshal Abdel Hakim Amer was given charge of the armed forces by President Nasser after the 1952 revolution, his first concern was to prevent a repeat performance. To this end, he decided to keep three departments of GHQ under his personal and direct control: The Defense Intelligence Department (DID), the Officers Department, and Finance. Through them he automatically gained sway over every other section of the armed forces. Through the Defense Intelligence Department he could learn who was "loyal" and who was not. Through the Officers Department, which was responsible for careers and postings, he could promote the loyal and sidetrack the skeptical. With Finance he could solve problems "on the spot," as he used to put it. Loyalty could be well rewarded.

Amer's successors as Ministers of War, General Fawzi and then General Sadek, continued the system. Power is attractive; who but a saint willingly renounces it; and how many armies contain saints? Personally, I had enough on my hands as Chief of Staff without delving into those areas. Besides, Sadek and I had been friends for 30 years, since we were junior officers together. But a series of incidents, minor in themselves, led to confrontation between us.

As a previous Director of the Defense Intelligence

Department, Sadek knew most of its personnel. He would phone them without reference even to the current director. By contrast, I knew little about the Defense Intelligence Department and cared less, so long as they met my need for accurate intelligence about the enemy. But early in my time as Chief of Staff, I had my first glimpse into the Defense Intelligence Department's ramifications.

I was in my club, the Sporting Club, Heliopolis, chatting with a retired Egyptian ambassador who had given distinguished service to his country. Suddenly he told me that he could not get a visa to leave Egypt, even for a holiday, unless he got a letter of permission from the armed forces. The reason was that, 18 years before, he had been an officer. Baffled by such a silly regulation, I promised to explore. The Director of the Defense Intelligence Department confirmed it. When I told him to cancel it, he politely requested I discuss it with the Minister. Sadek overruled me. In collaboration with the Director of the Defense Intelligence Department I learned the Minister operated a blacklist of officers forbidden to leave the country. To cancel the regulation would be to let them leave. I suggested we give the list to the police department, which issues visas, and save thousands of manhours by letting non-blacklisted officers get visas in the usual way. Ah, Sadek said, that would reveal there was a blacklist; "for security reasons" we must keep even its existence secret. The discussion ended. "For security reasons:" the alibi of any autocratic regime for any oppressive act.

But that was the merest tip of the iceberg, the smallest fragment of the vast security apparatus that Egypt's

political leadership commands. The rulers of Egypt have at their disposal three competing intelligence services. The Defense Intelligence Department (DID) which reports to the Minister of War. The National Intelligence Service (NIS) under the direct control of the President. And the Secret Investigations Department, run by the Minister of the Interior. The first two have responsibilities outside the frontiers of Egypt. All three spy on Egypt's citizens, particularly in its armed forces.

Despite the fortunes lavished on their equipment, their methods are primitive. Every agent of the DID, for example (I speak of DID because I came to see their products regularly) simply reports any rumor, tidbit, snippet of gossip he hears. The resulting *melange* is served up, on the desk of the President as "opinion in the armed forces." In one of my monthly meetings with field and staff commanders, I criticized this inanity. The Deputy Director of the Defense Intelligence Department was present, so I asked him: "If we really want to know opinion within the armed forces on something, why don't we go about it scientifically? Circulate a questionnaire among a properly selected sample? Announce the findings in polling fashion, instead of relying on this chaos of random gossip." The field commanders enthusiastically supported me. I doubt if there was one who had not at some time suffered as a result of lies, distortions or simple error which the Defense Intelligence Department had relayed to GHQ and to the President about them or their units.

Having made the point, though, I knew there was no chance of its being taken. The Defense Intelligence Department is under the Minister of War. The Minister of War by and large does what the President wants. And

what the President wants to create is rivalry. The reports of each service go to the President. If two report a rumor, while the third does not, it is at once suspected that there is a conspiracy in the third to suppress it. That's Egypt—a land where the leadership does not trust the people.

Yet men with much to offer Egypt have their careers, their whole lives ruined by the secret exercise of the arbitrary power this apparatus serves and encourages. Sadek's control of the Officers Department provides a classic example. As Chief of Staff I chaired the Senior Officers Committee, 15 generals responsible for the promotion, dismissal, punishment, and almost everything concerning senior officers except appointments to new jobs and transfers between districts. We took the job seriously, sometimes spending hours on a single case, with meetings perhaps lasting days, before deciding by majority vote. Our decisions were then passed to the Minister for approval—I assumed as a matter of routine, since he could hardly overturn in five minutes what it might have taken us hours to decide. But no, on one or two officers' futures, Sadek simply ignored the committee. When I objected, he replied that he knew more about them than the committee did though he never specified what, and it was his right to approve our work. In that case, I said, there was no point my wasting my time or that of 14 senior colleagues: "Why don't you do it yourself and save us the trouble?"

But as one of the three key supporters of Sadat's coup, Sadek inevitably seemed impregnable. Equally inevitably, power went to his head. He was first flattered by it. I recall before one trip to Saudi Arabia he flourished a letter from Sadat telling King Faisal: "I have complete confidence in General Sadek. Anything he says or promises

he does in my name. You can speak and deal with him as if you were speaking or dealing with me." Then he was corrupted by it. He would travel in a Boeing requisitioned from our national airline with no concern for disrupted commercial schedules or loss of revenue. Favored officers would get free trips abroad and foreign medical treatment for illnesses quite adequately treated in Egypt, all the usual tricks to buy loyalty instead of earning it.

By the end of 1971, an air of divine right was creeping into Sadek's manner. If he said something, it had to be correct. Even so, the problems between us might have remained personal and essentially petty but for the fact that Sadek's political views were equally intolerant. His extreme aversion to communism led him to believe that anybody with remotely good relations with the Soviet Union or its envoys was a communist and instantly a personal enemy. Sadek's hostility to communism blinded him to the distinction between communism as an ideology and the Soviet Union as a superpower with national and global interests. It also blinded him to the strategic fact of Soviet indispensability to Egypt. As our relations with the Soviet Union soured, Sadek was only too happy to help the process.

But our first foreign policy clash came, not over the Soviet Union, but over Egypt's needs from its Arab allies:

November 27-29, 1971: The twelfth session of the Arab Collective Defense Council, meeting in Cairo. My first session as Assistant Secretary General of the Arab League for Defense (ASGALD). Undeterred by the brisk destruction of my first radical dream of a pooling of defense budgets, I put forward two projects. The first I had devised as another way of truly mobilizing Arab

military power. The second was a straightforward technical exercise.

Underlying the first, my modified mobilization plan, lay three hopes. I wanted to avoid the humiliation of front-line states having to beg for money to wage a struggle which, nominally, engaged Arabs everywhere. I wanted also to make those Arabs out of the front-line feel simultaneously proud and guilty: proud of playing a positive part in the battle, guilty when they set their part against the massive burdens of the front-line states. My third hope was to save money and, above all, time.

The plan which I reckoned would realize all three hopes was simple. Ask for men not money. Money cannot fight. To turn cash into fighting capacity takes at least two to three years, often longer. And then it does not go far. A modern field unit is an extraordinarily expensive concern, with ever-increasing costs not merely of weapons, but in training and operation as well. (To train a pilot to minimum battle standard takes three to five years and costs at least a million dollars, even before the cost of buying and running the air force he is to join.)

I had studied the forces of each Arab country, estimating what of value each could send to which front without raising internal security risks at home. My list cheered me:

IRAQ: Two squadrons of Hawker Hunters (available for the Jordanian front); three squadrons of MIG-21s and one squadron of MIG-17s (available for the Syrian front); one armored division and one mechanized division (Jordanian front).

SAUDI ARABIA: Two squadrons of Lightnings (Jordanian front).

LIBYA: One squadron of Mirage IIIs (Egyptian front).

ALGERIA: Two squadrons of MIG-21s and two squadrons of MIG-17s (Egyptian front).

MOROCCO: One squadron of F-5s and one armored brigade (Egyptian front).

It was a useful total: six fighter squadrons (five MIG-21s, one Mirage III); eight fighter-bomber squadrons (two Hawker Hunters, two Lightnings, three MIG-17s and one F-5); an armored division; a mechanized infantry division and an independent armored brigade. Imagine my surprise when the man whose forces stood to benefit most bitterly opposed my plan, Egypt's own Minister of War.

I had not told Sadek of the project before presenting it to the Arab Collective Defense Council. I took my job as Assistant Secretary General of the Arab League for Defense seriously. I saw no reason why, wearing my inter-Arab cap, I should inform Egypt's minister before anyone else's. I was an officer serving Egypt, but I felt I had to distinguish between my nationality and my inter-Arab obligations. Sadek felt differently. When I unveiled my project to the Arab Collective Defense Council session (selling it primarily on the time factor, keeping my more private reasons to myself) Sadek slipped me a note: "You are acting against the interests of Egypt." I disagreed and, discarding the slip, continued as before.

Sadek, furious, cornered me during the lunch break. "How can you ask for troops instead of money?" he raged. "We want money."

"You are here representing Egypt," I said. "You can say whatever you like and it will be discussed. I am not here representing Egypt. I am here representing the Arab League, and I must say what I think is right for the Arabs as a whole."

"I am your minister," he said.

"As Minister of War," I replied, "you certainly have authority over me as Chief of Staff. But you must know that authority does not extend to my function as Assistant Secretary General of the Arab League for Defense."

"But you are only Assistant Secretary General of the Arab League for Defense because you are Egyptian Chief of Staff."

"I know," I replied. "But I will not bargain away my freedom of action as Assistant Secretary General of the Arab League for Defense just to keep my job as Chief of Staff, and you must realize that."

"I will report your conduct to the President," Sadek shouted.

"You can of course," I said.

When the session resumed, my plan was agreed unanimously, since Sadek could hardly stand against it in public. I was deputed to visit those countries that were to provide reinforcements to see the units were properly trained and equipped. I congratulated myself on a major victory.

By comparison, my second proposal seemed literally easy sailing: a project to draw proper hydrographic charts of our Arab shores. The Arab littoral is more than 10,000 miles long, second only to the 12,400 miles of the Soviet Union's coast and just longer than that of the United States. Yes, I was chagrined to discover we possessed no good charts of our inshore waters. Arab navies were still navigating on charts inherited from the British and French, which were now out of date and inaccurate.

I saw no reason why we should not draw new charts for ourselves, especially since for defense reasons we would want the largest scale charts to remain secret. Egypt had the hydrographers. It would not be costly. I

found we could get from Britain two vessels equipped for our purposes for £1.5 million sterling. Nor, as it happened, was money a problem. The Arab Unified Command had been created by an Arab summit in January 1964 but suspended in March 1967. Ever since it had slowly been liquidating itself; but £3 million sterling was still deposited in the Command's name in Egyptian banks. The cash belonged to the Arab world: the Arab Collective Defense Council was the only authority that could approve the spending of it. I proposed we use the cash to finance the survey. My plan was immediately and unanimously approved. That, too, was to lead to confrontation with Sadek.

Problems with the Russians

The glow that the October agreement had brought to our relations with the Soviet Union soon faded. The October agreement stipulated that arms were to be delivered by the end of the year. They were, but not with enough time for us to train our pilots and navigators; therefore, as 1971 closed, our capabilities were not increased at all. (Specifically, we needed at least three months to train our MIG-17 pilots to fly MIG-21s, and 9-12 months to train flight teams for the TU-16s, mainly navigators.) It became increasingly clear that the Soviets were not in favor of our launching an offensive before the end of the "year of decision," as President Sadat persisted in announcing daily. It is interesting to note that to save face after all the propaganda surrounding the "year of decision," Sadat tried to claim that the arms had actually not been delivered.

December 20, 1971: Soviet Ambassador Vinogradov met with Sadat. Sadat told us later the Ambassador informed him that Soviet reconnaissance had detected growing Israeli troop concentrations in Sinai. The Soviets had also learned, he said, that Israel had fresh guarantees of United States' support in the event of a resumption of fighting. It was also very probable that Israel would attack more than one Arab country simultaneously.

December 25: Grechko in Cairo. A 24-hour stopover on his way back to Moscow from Mogadishu, so it was not an official visit. But it came just after the Indo-Pakistan War (which had ended with the secession of east Pakistan under the name Bangladesh) so no doubt it served some purpose in the game of nations. Or perhaps, having heard from the Soviet advisers of our discontent, Grechko wished to check things out for himself. He was in fine form; I had never seen him so jovial as at the dinner in his honor that evening at the Soviet Embassy. "Just imagine," he boomed with heavy emphasis, "only yesterday my group and I took a dip in the Indian Ocean." His statement did not go unnoticed. It was a clear message to the effect that the Soviet Union is ready, willing and able to come to the aid of its friends.

January 2, 1972: By the New Year, Sadek's criticisms of the Soviet Union were becoming more strident and more public. The President summoned the Armed Forces Supreme Council, I assumed to find out how many shared Sadek's views. My notes summarize his account of the political situation:

—The Americans are giving Israel complete support; while the Soviets have not yet supplied us with what they promised last October. Nor did the deal concluded

by General Hassan include all the weapons Sadat had been promised.

—The Americans are not going to exert pressure on Israel. They now call their role that of "catalyst."

—1971 was to have been our "year of decision;" but the Soviet failure to supply arms and the outbreak of war between India and Pakistan had forced the President to reconsider.

Sadat then asked for our assessment of the military position:

FAHMY (AIR DEFENSE): "My problem is that I am being asked to prepare an offensive battle with defensive weapons."

FAHMY (NAVY): "We must put pressure on the Soviets to force them to send us those supplies. We could partially or completely close our ports to Soviet vessels if they do not respond."

BAGHDADY (AIR FORCE): "What I need is a deterrent aircraft [i.e., with the capacity to hit back if Israel bombed Egypt's interior]. A fighter-bomber, about Mach Two, with a good payload and the range to reach the enemy's interior."

GENERAL ALI ABDEL KHABIR (CENTRAL DISTRICT): "The deficiencies in our armed forces make a successful offensive impossible. The main weakness lies in our air force, our lack of transport and communications equipment, and our inability to find a way of opening passages fast enough through minefields."

GENERAL SAID EL MAHY (ARTILLERY): "We must do something within our capabilities."

MYSELF: "Despite all their deficiencies, our armed forces can mount a limited offensive. The President should contact the Soviets and settle with them the broad

issues that will affect our planning. For instance, the Soviets have considerable forces in Egypt: two fighter brigades, an air defense division and several electronic warfare units. We must know what the position of these will be in the event of our launching an assault, especially the role of those electronics units whose task would be to support the offensive."

SADEK, (SUMMING UP): "We are all ready to fight. But we must not decide on war unless victory is guaranteed. The country could not take another defeat. Our forces have many deficiencies. These we must remedy before going into battle. For my part, I will try to remedy some of the defects through purchases from the Western bloc. I will report to you, Mr. President, as soon as I have accomplished that." (See Appendix: Notes to Sadat's Conferences.)

January 24: An address by Sadek to several thousand officers of all ranks. The Soviets, he told them, had not supplied the weapons and equipment we needed. They were deliberately blocking Egypt's offensive. Unless the President could get some new agreement in Moscow in a visit already scheduled for early February, we would buy the weapons anywhere in the world. He warned that the Russians were circulating rumors that our forces already had all they needed but the commanders were unwilling to fight. They must not listen to such lies, Sadek said. It was his most outspoken attack on the Soviet Union so far.

Gathering Reinforcements

January 27: The next stage in my effort to mobilize the Arabs' own resources. The Arab Collective Defense

Council had decreed in November that I should tour the Arab world to assess reinforcement capabilities. But to leave Egypt I needed the President's permission. I was unsure what Sadek had told the President about the Arab Collective Defense Council session, so I confined myself to a brief note asking Sadat's permission to visit Libya, Algeria, Morocco, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Weeks passed. No reply. Today I asked for his decision.

"I do not agree to it," he said. "It is a waste of time. The only useful trips would be to Libya and Saudi Arabia. The others would use your visit for propaganda but contribute nothing to the battle."

I reminded him I would be travelling as Assistant Secretary General of the Arab Defense League, not as Egyptian Chief of Staff.

"Even so," he said, "there is no disguising the fact that you are Chief of Staff."

"Mr. President," I replied, "I know Egypt has poor relations with Algeria, Iraq and Morocco. Even so, if we succeed in getting anything from them towards the battle, we have got something. If not, we have lost nothing."

"Look," Sadat shouted. "You are a professional soldier. You know nothing about politics. I have been in politics for twenty years, and I know these people. Sometimes they bargain; sometimes they just criticize; sometimes they say yes and then impose unacceptable conditions. There is no hope at all with them. How can you possibly visit a country which persistently attacks us and criticizes our policy?"

"Mr. President," I said as calmly as I could, "no doubt your own bad experience has made you abandon hope of cooperation. But I remind you of the saying of the

Prophet: 'Love your friend, but not too much, someday he may be your enemy. Hate your enemy, but not too much, someday he may be your friend.' "

"I have never heard that saying," the President said after a pause. "It sounds like a wise one. Repeat it."

I did. Suddenly he laughed. "God bless you, get on with your tour."

February 2: President Sadat flew to Moscow.

February 6: I flew to Algiers, first stop on my Arab Collective Defense Council trip. After Algeria, Morocco then Libya on the way home.

February 7: My first meeting with President Houari Boumedienne. One of the first attempts by any senior Egyptian official, in fact, to heal the rift that had opened between our countries in the recriminations after 1967. Yet when I had explained my mission, the President's instant enthusiasm was tempered only by his doubt, which he did not hide, whether we had any real intention of going to war. "But you may rest assured," he said, "that when war does break out, we will send every soldier we can to fight beside our Egyptian brothers."

"Mr. President," I replied, "I understand your doubt. Even in Egypt a lot of people do not believe there is going to be a war. But when it comes, it will be too late to make use of Algerian or any friendly forces if they have not already been trained and prepared for their role. Our offensive plan must be geared to the troops at hand, not to those who might or might not join later. Nor could we incorporate them into our plan unless they were completely under our command."

Boumedienne said he saw the logic of that. But what if Algerian troops were stationed in Egypt waiting indefinitely for a war that might never come? "We Algerians

are hot-blooded," he said. "We are not good at waiting. When our men leave for Egypt, morale and spirit will be at fever-pitch. If they have to hang around, they will make trouble. Besides, they will want their families sent after them, or they will always be wanting leave to see their relatives here. All problems we would avoid if we sent them after a date is fixed for the war."

We found a compromise. We agreed that reinforcements from Algeria would not be called more than three months before the battle.

A persistent undercurrent to our discussion was Boumedienne's bitterness towards our leadership. Sadat was never mentioned; it was "you in Egypt." "You in Egypt continue to attack me," he said, "always claiming that I seek the leadership of the Arab world after the death of President Nasser. That is not true. I want to make it clear to you in Egypt that I have never even thought of it. All I want is that we join hands in a genuine endeavor to push the Israelis out of our occupied lands. It is humiliating to see that tiny, aggressive, expansionist state occupying our lands while we Arab states seem unable to summon the will to repel her."

I spent two days inspecting Algerian army and air force units. I was impressed. Algeria at independence had nothing. Zero. It was more French than Arab. In the decade since, the "Arabization" of Algeria had achieved more in the building of the armed forces, as in society as a whole, than I would have thought possible.

I also learned what sort of petty problem had been left to fester between us. When Algeria had withdrawn its brigade from Egypt in 1969, only the men and their light equipment had gone, I was told. Their heavy equipment stayed in Egypt. All the Algerians wanted

was a receipt for it, so they could close their books. I said I knew nothing about it, but would settle it; and on my return to Cairo, I did. In appreciation, Algeria offered us, in December 1972, 24 pieces of medium artillery.

February 9: To Morocco to meet King Hassan II. The ceremonial left me dazzled in spite of myself. I suppose I had envisaged a chief executive as any other, standing at his desk to greet me perhaps, with advisers ready in the room. The usual scene. Instead, I drove to the palace with his Minister of War, General Mohammed Oufkir, to find a guard of honor gleaming in traditional dress. We processed through cohorts of subordinates, passing at last into the hands of a chamberlain, no less, with a long staff which he hammered on the marble floor of the King's office to announce me. I concluded that Hassan was in the business of combining oriental splendor with Western trimmings. (And the few days I spent in that remarkable country—very oriental—yet at the same time the most infused with Western influence—confirmed my view.)

"The Moroccan Armed Forces are at your disposal," the King said when I had explained my plan. "Every person in the country will rejoice to see our forces fight for the Arab cause."

"Your majesty," I said as tactfully as I could, "I have come with an outline knowledge of your forces. But I do not know, for instance, if your ways of training are the same as ours. I would be grateful for the chance to visit units to see which are most suitable for the tasks we face."

Hassan gestured regally to Oufkir: "From tomorrow, General Shazly may visit any unit, select any unit." He turned to me: "After you are done, come and tell me

what you want. But be sure to see something of our country while you are here." He gestured again: "General Oufkir will meet all your demands."

When it came to politics Hassan, like Boumedienne, had complaints. Hassan's were against President Gaddafy of Libya: "His radio spends more than an hour a day reviling and attacking us. Why? What does he want of us? What have we done to him? Is it more sensible to expend our energies attacking each other or to direct them against our common foe?"

After two hectic days with his army and air force, I returned to the King, suggesting that the reinforcements he could provide were those I had initially envisaged: among them a squadron of F-5s and an independent armored brigade. Hassan approved. We discussed their weak points, how to remedy them, how to get them to the front and what supplies and ammunition they would need. As I rose to go, King Hassan was enthusiastic.

"Brother Shazly," he said, "someday you may write your memoirs. In them, I tell you, you will write: 'King Hassan kept his promise.' "

I smiled. "Your Majesty, I hope I shall."

February 12: Colonel Muammar el Gaddafy at the Revolutionary Council HQ in Tripoli. Also there: Prime Minister Major Abdel Salam Jalloud; Chief of Staff Lieutenant Colonel Abubakr Yunis; Deputy Chief of Staff Major Mustafa Kharuby; Minister of the Interior Major Abdel Muneim el Hony. All members of the Revolutionary Council. The office was humble; we were wearing fatigues; it was like a meeting in some distant desert outpost.

I had met Gaddafy several times in Cairo, but this was my first close conversation with him. In truth, I was not

there to ask for arms. I was there to relay the results of Algeria and Morocco and to visit Egyptian units and personnel in Libya. Gaddafy's own forces were so small that they had nothing of value to us except Mirage III fighter-bombers, and we already had those.

Ever since Gaddafy had come to power in September 1969, he had made Herculean efforts to build modern and powerful armed forces. His ambition exceeded his country's capacity. Libya had the money but not the personnel or technological base. So he was relying heavily on Egypt. Thousands of Libyan students were at our military schools and colleges. Egypt was handsomely recompensed. Gaddafy had acquired the Mirage III from France in such numbers that Libya could not absorb them. So he had proposed that Egyptians on Libyan passports go to France for training and then base themselves in Libya. One squadron would be wholly manned by Egyptians, ready to fly to Egypt when they were needed. Apart perhaps from some artillery and some armored personnel carriers there was little further Libya could offer us, certainly no major units.

When I told Gaddafy of my previous meetings, he responded simply that he did not believe Hassan would send troops. I said I thought he would.

"What makes you so sure?" Gaddafy asked.

"I have been dealing with men for more than 30 years," I said. "I think I can fathom who means what he says and who does not."

Gaddafy looked around at his colleagues. "In that case, Hassan must have felt danger from his own men and decided to get them out of the country," he said. I thought it improper to get dragged into that sort of talk, so I broke in: "Mr. President, suppose that is correct.

Does it make any difference to you or to us? So long as we get those troops for the battle."

Gaddafy nodded: "You are right. It would make no difference." He cheered up after that. "Brothers," he said as the meeting ended, "it seems that the Arabization of the battle we were calling for is going to happen after all."

February 14: Back home. That evening I met President Sadat at a dinner in honor of the Bulgarian Prime Minister. In a couple of sentences I told him the trip had been a success. A few days later I sent him a full report. When I then met him to discuss it, I had thought he would be delighted. To my amazement he dismissed it.

"You have been deceived," he said. "Your statements during the tour have absolved them of any charges or blame, and in return you have got nothing."

I reminded him of the solemn promises of Boumedienne and Hassan, but he mocked: "King Hassan has said just the same even in front of Arab summit meetings and never honored it. As for Boumedienne, how can we let him know three months in advance that we propose to attack? The condition is unacceptable."

He forbade me to carry on to Jordan. King Hussein was as bad as the rest: disloyal to the Arab cause; sold himself to the Americans; no hope of realigning him. "It is a waste of time to deal with the man at any level. I do not agree to your accepting the invitaion," he said. I consoled myself with the thought that at least my visits might have helped to break the ice between Egypt, Algeria and Morocco. Sadat must have agreed. Less than three months later, he flew on an official visit to the two countries.

A Question of Payment

February 15: Back at my desk at last, I began studying the outcome of the President's sessions in the Kremlin. As well as confirming their obligations under the October agreement, the Soviets had now also agreed to supply:

—200 T-62s, their latest and most powerful tanks; ten to come in March 1972 for training, the rest before the end of May.

—20 TU-22 bombers (each with a payload of nine tons). Two could be delivered in March, the rest within the year.

—25 MIG-17s to be delivered immediately.

—Electronic equipment to upgrade our electronic capability.

The Soviets had also promised they would help Egypt to manufacture its own MIG-21MFs, construction to start in phases and be in full swing by 1979.

February 18: Marshal Grechko in Cairo again, this time for a three day official visit. We had military discussions, but Grechko's main purpose was political. The Soviets were trying to soften Sadek's opposition to them. Grechko failed. At one meeting such rough words passed between them that the talks seemed about to collapse. But other meetings followed. The two even dined privately at Sahara City restaurant. I was invited to join them but declined. I thought they needed as much privacy as possible if they were to resolve their differences. But they could not. After Grechko departed I had private words with Sadek. I found him as intransigent as ever. Nothing would budge him from his conviction that the Soviet Union was not "sincere" in its cooperation with us.

I thought this was naive. They were indispensable to us; but we were important to them—as our problems in manning our own air defenses were at that moment demonstrating.

The story goes back to January 1970 when, with our air defenses in ruins, President Nasser had gone to Moscow to ask for Soviet help. The Soviets had sent two fighter brigades and an air defense division. The deal had three main clauses. The first was that Egypt would buy the equipment. Constitutionally, the weapons would then be part of Egypt's own forces, merely operated by friendly troops. The second was that Egypt would provide food and field clothing for the crews and pay Moscow the equivalent of their salaries in hard currency—£150 sterling a month for a soldier and £170 sterling a month for an officer. The third stipulation was that the Soviet personnel would be withdrawn as soon as Egypt could train its own.

So hectic was the expansion of our air defenses, however, that despite the scale of our training program it was only by the spring of 1972 that we had some spare manpower to relieve part of the Soviet crews. At that point, of course, we wanted to relieve the Soviet crews as soon as possible, partly to save hard currency, partly for reasons of national pride. Sadek had written to Grechko, requesting the withdrawal of 18 battalions of Soviet SAM crews.

Moscow was dismayed. That was one reason why Grechko had come to Cairo. He suspected Sadek's anti-Soviet stance was the root cause of the request. Even if that were wrong, the Soviets still opposed any move which appeared to reduce their presence in the area, a presence which had become a part of their global strategy.

President Richard Nixon was due to visit Moscow in May. Withdrawal of the crews might weaken Moscow's hand at the summit. Grechko wanted a compromise. I saw the episode as the clearest evidence of Soviet concern to keep our alliance in good order. Sadek would not agree.

* * *

Sadek's obsession with communism was another obstacle to my relationship with him, as if we did not have enough problems on that score. In the New Year, Sadek had made a direct assault on my role. He announced that as Minister of War he was the only one entitled to make decisions. I should submit everything to him.

"In that case," I replied, "what you need is a *chef de cabinet* not a Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces."

"Read that," Sadek said, handing me a sheet of paper. "You will see I am acting within my powers." It was a presidential decree dating from Fawzi's time as Minister of War, couched in vague terms but broadly giving the Minister total discretion. I had no doubt that Fawzi had drafted it and got it signed without any independent or contrary advice having been sought. It is a too frequent phenomenon in Egypt that a man of power will tailor a law or decree to his own ends and then claim, virtuously, to be acting "in accordance with the law."

To stave off Sadek's demands, I set up a committee to examine the division of functions. Gohar, the Chief of Organization, and General Abdel Ghany el Gamassy, Chief of Operations, were on it. The unanimous opinion was that the Minister should remain a political figure, responsible for politico-military strategy but leaving

military decisions to the Chief of Staff. To avert charges of self-aggrandizement I proposed this should bind only our successors. Sadek refused to listen.

Increasingly, the issue behind our dispute was how far Egypt's leadership would let political considerations stand in the way of the nation's needs. In public the leadership called for an all-out struggle against the enemy and promised full support to the armed forces in that effort. In private the leadership's paramount concern was to preserve a regime of autocratic privilege, which it upheld by lying to its citizens and then spying on them to see if they believed the lies. Even if the price were the failure of our assault on the enemy, the regime was determined to keep the armed forces subservient to that real, secret end.

The T-62 tanks provided a classic example of this. From the President's February visit we had learned that Moscow was to supply us with 200. We had to plan, in advance, how best to absorb them.

February 26: A meeting to settle the question. Sadek in the chair. The T-62s, with their 115mm guns, were so powerful that, properly deployed, they could exert decisive influence on a battle. I proposed they be allocated to our two armored divisions and kept in reserve to deploy as and when the battle demanded. The Minister, long with Gamassy and Gohar, argued that they should replace the T-55s in our two independent armored brigades. (The difference being that our armored divisions functioned as independent battle formations; while the independent armored brigades—independent, that is, of the rest of our armor—were used as support formations.) The T-55s released from the brigades would in turn

replace the older T-34s in other formations. I urged this would risk dissipating the potential impact of the T-62, especially if the independent brigades were dispersed in battle, as they could well be, to reinforce a variety of field formations. The Vice Minister, General Hassan, agreed with me.

February 27: The meeting resumed, this time with Soviet advisers. Sadek sounded my colleagues one by one. Hassan had changed his views. I had not. Then the Soviet advisers spoke. They all agreed with me. Sadek, displeased and with all his intelligence officer's antennae roused, turned to the Senior Soviet Adviser, "I see," he said to General Okunev, "you and General Shazly are in complete agreement."

The tanks were allotted, as Sadek had decreed, to the 15th and 25th armored brigades. His main reason, I discovered later, was that the regime had doubts—no more, just doubts—about the loyalty of the brigadier commanding one of the armored divisions and judged that 100 T-62s in his hands would be a risk to internal security. (Since then, of course, the leadership has changed its view of what is an acceptable opinion and what is not. Now the potential traitors are all patriots, the patriots all traitors. The seesaw of autocracy.)

March 10: General Hassan set off for Moscow, as usual, to sign the contracts for the equipment agreed with Sadat in February. He returned without having signed contracts for the promised T-62s and TU-22s. The Soviets, he reported, were demanding payment in full and in hard currency.

We were dumbfounded. Since President Nasser's first arms deal in 1955, Moscow had granted Egypt the most

generous terms. We were charged half price. We were loaned the balance at two percent interest a year. We could pay off the loan over 10-15 years and in non-convertible currency. Even at full price, Soviet equipment tends to cost roughly half the price of its Western equivalent. The upshot was that we were getting our arms at roughly one-quarter of their Western price, payable in our own currency. (Examples: the MIG-21 was costing us about E£250,000 and the T-55 about E£25,000, approximately $365,500 dollars and $36,765 dollars respectively. In now demanding payment in full and in hard currency, the Soviets were thus effectively quadrupling their prices to us and demanding cash on the barrelhead. That is how Western governments operate. But it baffled us why the Soviets should have adopted this position. They must know we could not afford it. Our only conclusion was that they were hoping Libya or Saudi Arabia would finance us.

March 18: Sadek wasted no time. He called a meeting of the Armed Forces Supreme Council with himself in the chair. His ostensible purpose was to deny rumors.

"There are rumors," he said, "that there are differences between myself and the Prime Minister, Dr. Aziz Sidky. The rumors are not true. There are rumors of a falling-out between myself and the Soviet Union. These too are untrue. The differences that exist are differences of principle. There are rumors that the Soviet Union is going to control the naval bases at Alexandria and Mersa Matrouh. These also are untrue."

He went on to talk about Hassan's visit to Moscow. He had not succeeded in getting the main items we wanted. The Soviet price was now 5.6 million rubles for each TU-22 and 250,000 rubles for each T-62, roughly

$8.4 million dollars and $375,000 dollars respectively. And the Soviets had asked that even the ammunition be paid for in hard currency.

I left the meeting wondering precisely what Sadek was trying to achieve. Rumors in Egypt are frequently not what they seem. Often they are manufactured and spread by the authorities to serve some person or cause. I fancied General Sadek's "rumors" were of that sort. It was well known, certainly among the senior officers of the armed forces, that the new Prime Minister, Dr. Aziz Sidky, favored close cooperation with the Soviet Union. The Prime Minister had therefore become one of Sadek's targets. I concluded that Sadek himself was spreading these rumors to underline his anti-Soviet credentials, and was now seeking new adherents from the bad news of the Soviet terms of sale.

March 19: A morning meeting with Sadek and General Okunev. Extraordinary news. Yesterday Okunev and Soviet Ambassador Vinogradov met the President. Okunev said that Sadat had told them:

—He personally had instructed Prime Minister Sidky to tell Moscow that Egypt was ready to pay for arms in hard currency. That was why the Russians had demanded it of Hassan.

—Egypt was ready to pay in full, in hard currency, for the MIG-21s and the M-500s (if the Soviets would sell them to us) but not for the TU-22s.

—Instead of buying the TU-22s, Egypt would be reinforced by Lightnings: two squadrons from Saudi Arabia and one from Kuwait.

—We badly needed the T-62 tanks but could not afford them. It was possible Libya might pay for them, but there were still problems.

—Egypt would pay for ammunition in hard currency.

—Egypt was determined to replace the Soviet SAM crews. But as a gesture we would relieve only 12 battalions, not the 18 stipulated in Sadek's letter to Grechko.

Amazed, Sadek could say only that he knew nothing of any of this and would have to contact the President. After Okunev had gone, Sadek telephoned Sadat. I was beside him. The President confirmed Okunev's account, adding that when he had agreed to pay for ammunition he meant for the expansion of Egypt's own production facilities rather than for ammunition itself.

It was about 1030 hours when Sadek put the phone down. He left almost at once for the airport, bound on a scheduled trip to Saudi Arabia. I began the most immediate task: the replacement of 12 Soviet air defense battalions. Suddenly the President phoned. He told me to report at once, bringing with me the Vice Minister, General Hassan.

At 1230 hours we were at the Giza residence. The President's National Security Adviser, Hafez Ismail, was already there. At the President's request, Hassan launched into a detailed account of the difficulties in Moscow. The President listened without comment. Then he said: "I have been informed there is considerable discussion with the armed forces, organized debate, about relations with the Soviet Union. The men are being told by their officers that the Soviet Union is insisting on payment in hard currency; that a secret agreement has given the Soviet Union naval bases; and that the Defense Intelligence Department wants to know the views of officers and men on both points." He had learned this, he said, from a police officer (he meant a member of the Secret Investigations Department) and he produced the man

from an anteroom to repeat the story. The man said he had it from "one of his friends" in a military unit.

The President said he wanted the following understood. Our friendship with the Soviet Union was a strategic necessity. We had to maintain it. It was our only card. It was one we needed to play soon. As for bases, we would give facilities to the Soviet Union but never bases. Finally, information revealed to the Armed Forces Supreme Council must on no account be passed to, or discussed by, lower levels.

General Hassan then left the meeting. I stayed on, but to talk of other matters. How we were to get the weapons we needed remained unresolved.

A Tale of Two Allies

March 23: A very short notice an Iraqi delegation under Vice President Saddam Hussein arrived in Cairo. Their decision to come, especially with so powerful a figure was significant. Behind the scenes, Saddam Hussein was the real strong man of Iraq. We hastily convened to decide our position on the points likely to be raised. Present were Vice President Mahmoud Fawzy; National Security Adviser Hafez Ismail; Minister of the Interior Mamdouh Salem; Foreign Minister Mourad Ghaleb; myself; the Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs; and the Egyptian Ambassador to Iraq.

Given the rivalry between Syria and Iraq, none of us wanted to do anything to damage relations with Syria, which was already sharing the burden of the battle. The Ambassador was inevitably, I suppose, keenest to advance toward cooperation and conciliation; most of the others were suspicious of Iraqi intentions. "Whatever

they say, I don't think they want unity," one remarked. "I don't think they will send troops to the battle either. They are up to some party maneuver, that's all."

I urged we try. For me, Iraq meant 250 combat aircraft, four infantry divisions, and two armored divisions. "If we can guarantee even a part of that, it will add a new dimension to our forces," I said.

Iraq would probably ask who would command any forces it might send to the Syrian front. We had to make it clear they should be under Syrian command. They might also say they would send troops only after the war began. We should oppose this. They would never arrive in time to be useful. Finally, Iraq might point to the weakness of Syria's air defense: would the Iraqi Air Force be destroyed by surprise attack if it were sent to the front before the battle? But I knew from my own discussions that Syria was ready to let the Iraqis build what air bases they liked on Syrian soil and install what equipment they liked to defend themselves.

The talks went round and round. Our delegation was instructed to concentrate on the help Iraq could offer the battle and to beware any step that might offend Syria; the Iraqis insisted their differences with Syria could be surmounted. The only positive outcome was Saddam Hussein's insistence that I visit Iraq as I had other countries, to see their forces for myself.

To run ahead of sequence, I finally went to Iraq at the end of May—the first official visit by a high-ranking Egyptian for years. (Sadat had been reluctant to let me go. His opinion of Iraq and its President, Ahmed Hassan el Bakr, was no higher than his views of Hassan, Boumedienne or Hussein.) From May 26 until June 2, I toured the country from the Kurdish settlements in the

north to the Shatt-el-Arab in the south, scene of the border dispute with Iran. I saw every major military installation, and I met some of the thousands of Egyptian teachers, academics and technicians in Baghdad.

In our talks, President Bakr and others impressed upon me that Iraq had two main problems: the Kurds and the dispute with Iran. Its forces had to concentrate on those. Besides, Iraq was the eastern flank of the Arab world. Its forces were needed there. Even so, the Iraqis promised, when the battle started they would send a good part of their forces to the front. In addition, they would at once repair and recondition their Hawker Hunters—though to send to the Egyptian rather than the Syrian front.

I returned to Cairo frankly thinking I had little to show for my time but conditional promises—"The situation with the Kurds and with Iran must be quiet." I had a pleasant surprise a few days later. Vice Minister of Defense, General Adnan Abdel Gelil from Iraqi GHQ turned up in Cairo. Saddam Hussein was going to France in mid-June and wanted to know what equipment we needed, so Iraq could buy it for us.

So once more we had relations with Iraq, however tinged with caution. We offered places in our staff colleges and training centers to their officers and enlisted men. And Iraq generously put $7 million at our disposal in a London bank to cover urgent defense purchases in the West. The promised squadron of Hawker Hunters began to arrive in Egypt in March 1973.

* * *

Egypt's relations with Saudi Arabia were always mysterious. Even as Chief of Staff I was allowed no part

in them, but remained a distant and frequently puzzled observer. Relations were left to the Ministers of War, but also—and to a degree one could never fathom—to the President himself or his personal courier and emissary, Dr. Ashraf Marwan. Dealings were certainly brisk. I suppose they made well over 30 trips in my time as Chief of Staff. I never learned what happened at any of them.

The strangeness of the relationship was well indicated by the Lightnings. At the Arab Collective Defense Council meeting in November 1971, it had been decided we should mobilize two squadrons of Lightnings from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf. Back in my office, I was told Sadek would deal with this. A few weeks later Sadek informed me that the Saudis would not agree to sending pilots with the aircraft. Egypt would have to supply its own. I was told to send Egyptian pilots to train in Saudi Arabia before flying the aircraft back to Egypt. (Now, in March, it turned out that Sadat had told the Soviets we were doing it.)

It was nonsensical. Trained pilots, not aircraft, were what we lacked. With 100 Soviet pilots already flying Egyptian aircraft for us, how could we spare 10-15 of our own men for Saudi Arabia? (And Sadat's assertion that Lightnings could substitute for the TU-22 was equal nonsense.) But the decision stood. On May 2, 1972 the first contingent of seven pilots and 33 mechanics set off for Saudi Arabia.

It was a waste of time. There were so many problems with the serviceability of the aircraft and the standards of instruction and administration that, after wasting almost a year, our pilots finally returned to Egypt. The Lightnings never came.

Relations with Saudi Arabia seemed unaffected, though. To dispose of the point: it was in July 1973 that I had a phone call from Marwan. Saudi Arabia was going to sign a contract on our behalf for Sea King helicopters and 32 Mirages. Marwan now said that the sum allocated for machine gun ammunition for the aircraft was excessive —$35 million, he claimed—and had to be cut. I knew nothing about it. When I spoke to General Husni Mubarak, the new Air Force Commander, he said he had now asked for any ammunition. We just looked at each other.

Two more surprises came in that same conversation. Marwan said that King Faisal had decided to give a helicopter as a present to Sadat. Would I please send pilots to fly it home. When I mentioned this to Mubarak, he said he had already sent men to inspect it. It was an Augusta Bell L-13 with a single motor and a landing skid. Mubarak thought Sadat would reject it as too modest.

Final surprise: "Henceforth," Marwan said, "all contacts between Egypt and Saudi Arabia will be directly between President Sadat and King Faisal and not through the two defense ministers."

"Why tell me," I asked. "Shouldn't you be telling the minister?"

"Sure," Marwan said. "I will when he gets back from abroad. I'm just telling you for your information."

What was going on? I never knew. What I do know is that we never received either the Sea King helicopters or the Mirages which Marwan spoke to me about.

Confrontation with Sadek

April 20, 1972: My worst clash with Sadek. The issue, unexpectedly, concerned neither the Soviets nor the conduct of the armed forces. It was a matter of constitutional propriety.

After the Arab Collective Defense Council had unanimously approved the plan to buy two vessels to chart our inshore waters, it was my task as Assistant Secretary General of the Arab League for Defense to carry out the decision. I decided to send General Abdel Raouf to Britain to finalize a deal. Raouf was an Egyptian officer temporarily removed from his regiment to serve the Arab League as Chief of Staff of the Arab Unified Command, with the task of winding it up. Raouf had today set off for London, only to be arrested by the Defense Intelligence Department on Sadek's direct orders at Cairo airport, treated like an escaping felon, and his passport withdrawn. It was an appalling breach of the rule that Arab League personnel have diplomatic immunity on League business. And Sadek himself had voted in favor of the deal Raouf was flying out to arrange. His detention was a deliberate challenge by Sadek to my independence as Assistant Secretary General of the League.

I got back to my office from a field exercise about 1730 hours to learn the news. By 2000 hours I was in Sadek's office. It was the worst encounter I have ever known between two old friends, let alone a minister and a chief of staff. But for me it was the last straw.

We had to see the President, I said. Things could not go on like this.

"Good idea," Sadek shouted, equally livid. "On Saturday I will go with you to the President and ask him to

choose between us, either you or me in the armed forces."

The next day was a Friday (the Arab weekend). Sadek, still without authority, dismissed Raouf from his post in the Arab Unified Command and sent a cable to London withdrawing the funds deposited for the contract.

April 23, 1130 hours: Sadek and I in front of the President at his Giza residence. I told everything including the Raouf incident and Sadek's efforts to bar me from areas such as the Intelligence Department and Officers Department. "Mr. President," I said, "in that situation, with those departments under the exclusive control of General Sadek, I cannot be answerable for the security of the armed forces"—polite usage for a coup. Recounting our disagreement over the deployment of the T-62, I made my point. I did not care if our opinions differed. What disturbed me was that Sadek should clearly think my opinions were influenced by and concerted with, the Soviets.

Listening with what objectivity I could, I thought Sadek's reply was weak. On Raouf he hedged: raised questions about the method of payment; talked of Intelligence knowing a good deal about Raouf; spoke of having ordered an inquiry; promised the President results in a few days. On the Defense Intelligence Department, he agreed I had to be informed, while defending his right to do what he pleased without consulting me. On the careers of officers, he said it was his right to approve the committee's work, and, anyway, he could recall intervening only once or twice.

I broke in: "It's a matter of principle. To rescind the decision of a committee of 15 generals you should have a reason far stronger than your personal view. An officer's future should not be left in the hands of one man."

"See, Mr. President," Sadek answered. "He is trying to deprive me of my rights."

On the T-62 I thought Sadek confirmed my point, since he said sweepingly that I was always against him, always siding with the Russians.

The President, invariably, made no decision. "Mohammed," he said to General Sadek, "you must inform Saad of everything going on in the Intelligence Department and Officers Department. He does share the responsibility."

But when he turned to me, it was clear that Sadek had touched deeper chords. "Look Saad, you must be careful," Sadat said. "The Russians will deceive you. Everyone now dislikes them and, knowing that, they will try to use you. You will be the loser."

"Mr. President," I repeated, "if I agree with the Russians on certain subjects, that should not be taken as evidence that I am colluding with them against anybody. I always say what I think is right for my country, no matter whose side that puts me on."

"I know, I know," the President said. "I know you are a patriot and would never do anything against your country. But I do fear you might be deceived and dragged in the wrong direction."

So after three hours nothing was resolved. Things ran smoothly for a few weeks, then degenerated again. Meanwhile, the inquiry Sadek had promised into Raouf proceeded to hunt for financial scandal, with Sadek's nominee as Raouf's successor energetically lending a hand. All Raouf could be accused of, in the end, was phoning a daughter in the United States from his office, buying a fountain pen with official funds, and similar trivia.

I am a hardliner: I disapprove totally of any financial laxness. But I could not help contrasting Raouf's "crimes" with the liberties taken by our leadership. What is one phone call compared to a permanent private telephone line to Europe? What is a fountain pen beside the use of State-owned aircraft to fly personal errands to Paris, Rome or London? Why should the usual European travel allowance be £10 sterling a day, yet some have an open account for more than £200 sterling a day? Other, more serious corruptions I shall disclose when the time is right. My point is that power in Egypt today, as the Raouf incident demonstrated, means a license to do whatever you want, while breaking your opponents on trifling, even trumped up grounds.

* * *

April 27-May 10: The President in Moscow again, his second visit in less than three months and the longest yet. Significantly, Sadek did not go with him. Whatever the President says to me in private, his public posture remains that of the friend and defender of the Soviet presence in Egypt, while Sadek stays its Number One Enemy. It was ironic that while the President was in Moscow, Sadek and I in Cairo should have had to deal with two incidents that really did strain relations with the Russians.

The first came when the Soviet mission informed us that the Mediterranean fleet was carrying out an exercise and would like to land troops in the area of Mersa Matrouh on May 8 and withdraw them the next day. For obvious reasons that was rejected in fairly short order by the War Minister.

The next incident was pettier, but left a nasty taste.

May 8, 1700 hours: I was monitoring an exercise in Central District HQ when the Chief Soviet Adviser arrived. Okunev complained that personnel returning to the Soviet Union were being treated in an unfriendly manner at Cairo airport by our Customs. Some, Okunev said, might have a gold ring or bangle for his wife or sweetheart, but such trifles ought not to be treated as smuggling. I rang the Director of the Defense Intelligence Department. He said it was more serious than that. For some weeks, Soviet personnel had been observed buying great quantities of gold.

Reluctantly quitting the exercise, I drove with Okunev to my office to make a start on cooling everyone down and resolving the affair. Within half-an-hour Sadek had arrived, followed immediately by General Hassan Gereitly, Secretary General of the Ministry.

Sadek was soon trying simultaneously to explain to Okunev that he had no authority over the Customs, while whispering to Gereitly and me that he knew the Russians had about 200 pounds of gold among them. His suggestion to Okunev was that everyone should fill in a Customs form, hand over any gold and depart, on Okunev's assurance as the responsible officer that they would return if a court required it. When circumstances had cooled down, Sadek said, he would smooth everything over. Okunev repeated that his men had nothing to declare; and that to hand over trinkets taken as souvenirs of a year or more's service in Egypt would be a bitter disappointment to them.

The argument was getting nowhere until Sadek got a telephone call. He became more flexible. The same caller rang again. Sadek's attitude changed completely. I was now deputed to go to the airport to solve the problem. I

wanted no part of the squalid little incident, so Gereitly was dispatched instead. Sadek never identified his caller and I never asked. But he called him "Mohammed" from which I deduce it was the President's National Security Adviser, Mohammed Hafez Ismail, on the line.

We were all due at a Soviet Embassy "Victory Day" reception that evening. But when I left Sadek and Okunev around 1900 hours I was in no mood for it. Telling my secretary to make the necessary apologies, I went back to my interrupted training exercise.

I learned the next day that the Soviet personnel had, of course, been allowed to take what they had with them. I got the list. The 71 Soviets had been carrying: 75 rings, 45 seal-rings, 41 pairs of earrings, 26 necklaces, seven bracelets and three brooches. Total weight of gold less than three pounds, just over one-half ounce per person. So much for Defense Intelligence Department's "great quantities" and Sadek's "200 pounds". From all points of view, the affair left a nasty taste.

May 14: Marshal Grechko arrived in Cairo. At 1900 hours, the President received Grechko and Soviet Ambassador Vinogradov. Neither Sadek nor our Foreign Minister, Dr. Mourad Ghaleb, was present.

The meeting had been scheduled to last an hour. Then Grechko was to pay a courtesy call on Sadek at his home in Zamalek before going on to a dinner in his honor at the Officers Club not far away. But Grechko was with the President until 2300 hours, and when he did finally arrive he said jovially to Sadek: "I have nothing to give you. The President emptied my pockets."

"Well," Sadek said, "I hope what he found in them was everything we need."

Over dinner it was agreed that the new arms contracts

would be signed next day, as usual by General Hassan. But when, in a private moment, I asked Sadek what the contract would contain he swore he had no idea.

May 15: I was in Sadek's office. Hassan came in to tell us what he had learned the Soviets were offering:

—16 SU-17 aircraft: four to come in the next month, the rest before the end of the year;

—8 BETSHURA (SAM-3) battalions;

—200 T-62 tanks, half to be delivered in 1972 and the rest in 1973;

—a QUADRAT brigade, to be delivered in 1973;

—Spares and miscellaneous equipment.

I asked Hassan the price and terms for the T-62 tanks. He said he did not know. After he had gone, I said to Sadek: "You should find out from the President the Soviet conditions and let Hassan know." Sadek phoned the President. What he heard so astonished him that, having gestured me to listen, he began to repeat aloud the President's answers: "Do not discuss prices . . . Do not discuss delivery dates . . . The delivery schedule we have agreed is 60 tanks at once, that is to say during June; another 60 before the end of 1972; the remaining 80 during 1973 . . . And the QUADRAT brigade during 1972." Sadek put down the telephone and looked at me helplessly. "You heard the conversation," he said. "Before God and history you are my only witness. I shall agree to the signing of the agreement without discussing prices or delivery dates. I will at least try to put pressure on to get everything before the end of the year. But if they do not agree," he shrugged, "I will sign."

"Count on me," I said. "I will tell the truth." (I scribbled notes of the conversation in my pocket diary as soon as I left Sadak's office.)

I learned later that the Soviets had withdrawn their claim to be paid in full and in hard currency. Payment was to be on the old basis. But I still do not know for certain what passed between Sadat and the Soviet leaders. I would judge, however, that the Soviet Union agreed to the shipments to preserve its position in advance of the Nixon-Brezhnev Summit scheduled for May 20 in Moscow. In return, I am fairly sure, Sadat told them that the greatest obstacle to Egyptian-Soviet relations was General Sadek and promised to dismiss him at the first opportune moment.

* * *

That was not the day's only demonstration of how our politicians operate. To celebrate the deal there was a flying display by MIG -25s and SU-17s at one of our air bases, after which Sadat decorated Grechko with our Star of Honor and Marshal Kotakov, the Soviet Air Force Commander who accompanied Grechko, with the Military Star. Then a communique was issued claiming that Egypt now possessed an aircraft capable of flying at an altitude of 15 miles and a speed of almost 2,000 miles per hour, and that we now also had long-range fighter-bombers.

None of it was true. The MIG-25 had that performance; and the Soviet Union had four based in Egypt. But they had neither offered it for sale to us nor indicated that it would be. Whenever we broached the question they deflected us: "Why bother yourselves? The aircraft is already on your soil and being used for our joint benefit." (The MIG-25 was more advanced than any Israel or the United States possessed in service; so I

assume the Soviets reckoned that its sale to Egypt would be a security risk and would step up the arms race in the area.) As for the boasted "long-range fighter bombers," I asked our new Air Force Commander, General Mubarak. The SU-17s were to replace the TU-22s of the February list. The TU-22s had been too costly and, having studied its performance we had lost enthusiasm. But in Mubarak's opinions the SU-17 represented little if any advance upon the SU-7 we already had. In no way would one squadron of SU-17s add a new dimension to our air power. Anyway, they would not be operational before the end of 1972.

Reading the communique, I wondered who it was designed to deceive? Not the Americans or Israelis. With their advanced surveillance the United States would soon learn what we had. If they chose, the communique merely gave them the excuse to supply Israel with yet more sophisticated weapons, leaving Egypt still further behind. The only people deceived were the Egyptians and their Arab comrades. And the only beneficiaries the Soviets, who would reap prestige from the lies.

May 16: The immediate Soviet gain was a more tangible one, however. To complete the circus, two of the MIG-25s set off on a reconnaissance mission the length of Sinai, from Port Fouad in the north to Ras Nasrany by the southern tip. The mission started at 1000 hours; it was completed by 1035 hours. Two enemy Phantoms vainly rose to intercept from Meles air base in the center of Sinai, and two more climbed from Ras Nasrany air base. But the American SPARROW air-to-air missiles the Phantoms fired had no chance of catching the MIG. One spent missile from the Meles flight glided to earth west of the canal and our troops recovered it. We included

the tale in our May 17 armed services report which went daily to the President. He ordered that the missile be given to the Soviets, who were delighted with it.

Expelling the Russians

June 6: A meeting of the inner circle of the Armed Forces Supreme Council, called by the President at his residence at the Barrage. Sadek, myself, Hassan (Vice Minister), Mohamed Ali Fahmy (Air Defense), Mahmoud Fahmy (Navy), Messiry (Air Force Chief of Staff, substituting for Mubarak), Mehrez (Defense Intelligence Department), Gamassy (Operations), Khabir (Central District), Gohar (Organization), Gereitly (Secretary).

Sadek asked Gamassy to read out a report prepared by General Ahmed Ismail Ali, Director of the National Intelligence Service, and submitted to the President. Its conclusion was that the enemy's superiority, especially in the air, was such that Egypt's Armed Forces were in no position to mount a successful assault. The President then spoke: "We must distinguish between politicians and soldiers. You as soldiers must concentrate your efforts on preparing the troops for the coming battle. I realize, and General Sadek agrees with me, that we must not go into battle unless we have the capacity to deter Israel from attacking our interior [i.e., have an air force capable of raiding Israel in retaliation]. The problem which confronts us is what to do if we are obliged, politically, to go to war before we have that deterrent?"

I spoke next: "Nobody can doubt the facts in the report. Given its premise, its conclusions follow. For my part, I doubt the premise. If we are going to base our planning upon an adequate air force, we will have to

postpone the battle for years and years. Nobody could even predict a date. In fact, I believe the gap between our air force and the enemy's will tend to widen rather than narrow, whatever we do now or in the near future. The American strategy is to sustain Israel's air superiority against all Arab front-line states combined. We are having trouble getting appropriate aircraft from the Soviet Union. Even if we did, the enemy would simply get even more advanced versions from the United States. So it would go on. On top of which, the enemy has the capacity to absorb new types of aircraft faster than we can. So they will always be able at least to maintain the present gap and probably to widen it.

We have no choice therefore but to prepare ourselves for a battle under conditions of enemy air superiority. We can do it by challenging that superiority with SAMs."

Messiry (Air Force): "I totally agree with General Shazly."

President (ferociously joking): "Messiry, I swear to God, if the air force does not acquit itself well this time I personally will hang you from one of the trees in this garden." (See Appendix: Comments on Sadat's Conferences.)

June 8-13: General Sadek in Moscow.

June 20: Sadek called a small meeting. Myself, plus the commanders of the Air Force, Air Defense, Navy, Field Armies Two and Three, and the Director of the Defense Intelligence Department.

Before Sadek spoke, Mehrez, the Director of the Defense Intelligence Department, mentioned a report of a Soviet journalist visiting our field units, asking fairly loaded questions: "Israel has sophisticated weapons. When we supply you with weapons to match them, you

discover that Israel has even more advanced equipment, so you come back to us and ask for more. The gap between you and Israel is going to remain. It might even widen. Does that mean you will never fight? How is it that the people of Vietnam manage to fight with the same weapons, and against the Americans themselves?"

Sadek shot me a look. "That is Saad el Shazly speaking," was all he said. (General Saad Mamoun and General Abdel Muneim Wasel, Commanders of the Second and Third Armies respectively, came up afterwards to ask what Sadek had meant. I explained the June 6 meeting.)

Reporting on his visit to the Soviet Union, Sadek said that Grechko had told him Egypt must prepare its armed forces, its civilians and the country as a whole for a prolonged war. And Egypt must be supplied with the weapons to ensure victory. Brezhnev had then said:

ONE: The internal situation in Egypt was still not settled. Some looked to the East, some to the West.

TWO: The situation in the Middle East was complex. Israel was proposing solutions unacceptable to both of us.

THREE: The Soviet Union believe that what had been taken by force could only be regained by force. The Soviet Union would support Egypt.

FOUR: Our two countries must work together within the framework of United Nation's Resolution 242.

FIVE: To recapture one's territory one had first to create defensive forces. Then one could start to create forces of attack. But before doing so, one had to be clear whether those forces were actually going to fight.

SIX: The presence of Soviet advisers in Egypt was an international necessity.

SEVEN: The Soviet Union would never conclude an

agreement with the United States at the expense of Egypt.

EIGHT: The liberation of Egypt's territory was Egypt's own reponsibility. It was also Egypt's responsibility to help its friends in Syria.

Sadek's impression was of a Moscow in low gear. Soviet policy had not changed. On the other hand, Moscow wanted to keep the international scene quiet for six months until after the United States presidential elections in November. If Nixon won his second term, as Moscow expects, the Soviet Union would relax and go slow on weapons supplies to us in the hope of reaching a peaceful solution in accord with Washington. Meanwhile they remained concerned about the internal situation in Egypt and the security of their position. They have even asked that the Egyptian leadership eliminate all who might be thought anti-Soviet.[4]

July 9: The Saudi Embassy. A dinner in honor of their Minister of Defense, Prince Sultan. Sadek and Hassan were there too. In the midst of the joviality, Sadek drew us both into a quiet corner. "The President has decided to expel the Russians," he said.

"He phoned me last Friday [July 7] and said: 'What are your plans for the day?'" "Nothing, Mr. President," I said, "except to go to the mosque for midday prayers and a dinner this evening." "Why don't you come here to the Barrage," he said, "You can say your prayers here." "All right, Mr. President," I said. "I will be out directly."

When I arrived, he told me he had decided to expel the Soviet advisers and units from Egypt; that he would announce the decision in a few days, but wanted to inform me first so I could take the necessary precautions. He

told me not to tell anyone. For the past 48 hours I have been arguing with myself. Today I decided to tell you both, especially since I have realized that others here seem to know."

I was stunned: "But you must realize how dangerous this decision is," I said. "Surely we all know that. There is no question but that it will affect our capabilities. The Soviet units play such a large role in our air defense and electronic warfare."

Then I realized that even Sadek, the Soviets' leading antagonist in Egypt, was showing no joy. On the contrary: "I know," he said. "I tried to convince the President not to do it. But I couldn't. He just said: 'It is final. I called you to inform you of my decision, not to discuss it.' " Sadek was bewildered: "I always said we should exert pressure on them to get what we want. But I never thought we would go this far." Hassan was equally amazed.

I found myself reflecting on one of Brezhnev's reported comments to Sadek in Moscow last month: "The presence of Soviet advisers in Egypt is an international necessity." In my experience, the Soviets say and do nothing without a reason. I deduced that Soviet intelligence had wind of the impending decision. My other thought was to wonder: why now? Was it an impulsive response to some new Soviet statement of position? If so, what? Or had he made the decision in principle long before, merely waiting for some opportune moment to effect it? If the latter, who inside or outside Egypt knew of the President's decision? (In his memoirs Sadat presents the decision as a swift response to a Soviet rebuff. But in the light of all that has happened in the intervening seven years, I

am morally certain that the decision was in fact a calculated one, pre-arranged with others whose role Sadat is still anxious to conceal.)

July 16, afternoon: The President's decision was announced to the troops. It was to take effect the next day.

July 17: Sadek, Okunev and myself met. Topic: repatriation of Soviet personnel. There were four categories of personnel in Egypt, some more vital to us than others. First, we had about 870 Soviet "advisers." They gave, literally, advice on tactics, training and administration. Their departure would not affect us much. Second, we had more than 100 "experts"—technicians training our people on new weapons or equipment, anything from the T-62 to new night optical equipment. To lose them before our men were trained would gravely embarrass us. Finally we had "friendly forces"—two groups of them. One comprised of Soviet units operating weapons and equipment already purchased by Egypt and thus our own property. These forces included two fighter brigades and, still, a substantial part of an air defense division. The other group was operating equipment still wholly owned by the Soviet Union: in other words, Soviet units in manpower and weaponry. Some of this we were in process of purchasing: the QUADRAT (SAM-6) brigade, for instance. But other units had equipment the Soviets had always declined to sell to us: the four MIG-25s, the electronic warfare units and the electronic reconnaissance and jamming squadron.

Trying to abide by the President's adamant guidelines, while at the same time seeking to minimize the damage to our capabilities, Sadek and I proposed to Okunev

that we treat each category separately. Contracts of advisers and experts would be terminated forthwith. Friendly forces operating Egyptian equipment should hand it over to our men within one week. But those operating Soviet-owned equipment for which we had neither substitute equipment nor personnel should stay in Egypt, provided they now came under the control of the Egyptian command.

All Soviet personnel whose repatriation, though agreed, was delayed beyond August 1 would nevertheless cease all activity from that date.

It was a despairing effort. General Okunev was cooperative. He agreed to all terms except the crucial one that those we could not replace should stay. His orders, he said, were that everyone should go. But he promised to pass on our request and the answer. (To nobody's surprise, it was no.)

Politics apart, the logistics of the operation were taxing. Soviet personnel in Egypt totaled less than 8,000, including advisers, experts, field unit personnel and their dependents. Total Soviet field unit personnel (those operating Egyptian as well as Soviet equipment) totaled 6,014, including air force, air defense and electronic units. We offered help with transport, but Okunev said he was under strict orders to complete the operation by Soviet means only.

Over the next fortnight, problems rained on to my desk or into my telephone. Every service ringing to report new problems, ask for new instructions. "The Russians are dismantling the radars at Beni Sweif and Beir Arida air bases. What shall we do?" "The Russians are removing tons of spare parts from the units they are handing over

to us. What shall we do?" Meanwhile Okunev would be calling to report that while the Russians were crating an air force unit near Aswan, one of their most advanced air-to-air missiles, a type not in use with the Egyptian air force, had "disappeared."

My only rule, which I drummed into all who rang, was that the Soviets had the right to remove anything that was Soviet property. We should retain only those items specified in contracts with them. When I look back on the fact that the whole ghastly period passed without serious incident, I take a certain melancholy pride in the fact that at the top both Egyptian and Soviet commands were equally eager to resolve problems raised by hot-blooded young officers on both sides.

By the end of July, only 2,590 of the total 7,752 personnel had left by sea or air. We suspended the military college from July 28 to August 11, turning it into a makeshift hostel for those who could not leave by the August 1 deadline. The remaining 5,162—529 advisers and their families, and 4,633 friendly forces—were repatriated through the first half of August.

Then we had to start repairing the gaps. We had lost the four MIG-25s, the SMALTA electronic equipment to jam the guidance system of the enemy's HAWK surface-to-air missiles; the TAKAN equipment which could jam the radar transmissions of the enemy aircraft themselves; plus the Soviet electronic reconnaissance and jamming squadron.

August 15: The last problem was the QUADRAT batteries which, owned and manned by the Soviets, had been guarding the High Dam at Aswan. We had already signed a contract for two brigades of them, so the

Soviets did not regard them as secret and they offered to hand them over to us. Lacking personnel to operate them, we had refused. In the absence of an adequate air force, however, these mobile SAMs were so central to our offensive planning that we had to reconsider the problem. So General Sadek called a meeting—myself, Fahmy (Air Defense) and Okunev—to review it. Sadek told Okunev that the President now agreed the QUADRAT brigade could remain until the end of 1972, on condition that it carried out no operational mission, i.e., did nothing but train Egyptians. Okunev said he would consult Moscow.

August 29: It did not work. The commander of the Aswan military district phoned to say the Russians were pulling out their QUADRAT. Okunev confirmed the decision to me.

August 30: I was on the phone to the President and told him of the Soviet decision. "With our best wishes," was his only comment.

A Waste of Effort

With the departure of the Russians, the closest collaboration with our Arab neighbors seemed more than ever necessary. But the next month sadly demonstrated the gulf between theory and reality.

September 9-13: The council of the Arab League, at its 58th session in Cairo, decided to form a committee of the ministers of defense and foreign affairs of five countries to study ways to greater collaboration in the battle. Proposals were to go to the next meeting of the Arab Collective Defense Council towards the end of the year.

(The committee grew until 13 of the 19 full Arab League members were on it, so it became a mini-Arab Collective Defense Council in its own right.) The result of the committee was to confirm the assignment of troops from non-front line Arab countries according to what I had drawn up previously.

September 27: Almost immediately, however, we saw an example of how, despite such committees, personal relations still damaged our struggle. Brigadier Bahr, commander of the Sudanese infantry brigade assigned to us, came to tell me he had orders from Khartoum to withdraw his men. President Jaafar el Nimeiry had fallen out with Sadat.

It was a sad end to a developing relationship. When the Anyanya rebels in southern Sudan had become a real threat in November 1971, Egypt had supplied Khartoum with 100 tons of bombs, air-to-surface missiles and the technicians to train them in both. In thanks, a Sudanese infantry brigade had arrived in Egypt in spring 1972; and Egypt had also been allowed to set up some of its training centers in Sudan to keep them out of reach of the Israeli Air Force.

Now this collaboration was being destroyed, because two men had fallen out. (The next month, while the Sudanese were being repatriated, we heard that our men training in Sudan were running into trouble, so the political decision was made to withdraw them too.)

October 2: Another example of how the Arabs dissipate their power. Civil war had broken out in Yemen in September. Already the Arabs were divided in their support either of the Yemen Arab Republic (Northern Yemen) or the People's Democratic Republic

of Yemen (Southern Yemen). Ashraf Marwan now phoned from the presidency. We were going to send bombers to support the north.

Given the disaster of our last involvement in the affairs of Yemen, and given our desperate need for every piece of equipment we possessed, I found this incredible. But the President, when I phoned him, confirmed it, decreeing that we should send five MIG-17s as well as four Il-28 bombers. The aircraft were to go to Sanaa in Yemen via Jeddah in Saudi Arabia. Our pilots must not take part in the fighting, but they could train and brief the Yemenis. That same day, Yemeni pilots flew our fighters south. The Il-28, piloted by Egyptians, followed two days later. (Two weeks later, on October 15, another political decision was made to send 22 T-34 tanks—mercifully without crews.)

Why? The price of some related deal with the Saudis? I never knew. All I saw was yet another example of how a significant portion of the Arabs' military strength is not merely absent from the battle but is actually wasted in conflict with other Arab forces which should also be at the front.

Aftermath

The truth was, we had to rebuild our relationship with the Soviet Union. Even Sadat realized that. Through September, relations were at their lowest ebb. Then slowly they began to flow again. It was agreed that Prime Minister Sidky would go to Moscow in mid-October. Meanwhile, the Soviets began to explore just how total the rift was. And the President realized how insecure his regime might be.

October 4, 1972: The Soviet authorities asked permission for three naval tank transports to berth in Port Said harbor. They had based there only two months before and, though they had been withdrawn with all other Soviet equipment, they legally had the right to return. The five-year naval facilities agreement which Nasser had signed in 1968 had neither expired nor been abrogated. But I assumed the Soviet request was really to take the temperature before Sidky arrived in Moscow. I phoned the President, putting forward Sidky's visit as a reason why we might agree. "OK," he said. "Our agreement to grant them naval facilities is valid until March 1973. We can grant permission within the terms of that. If Sidky's trip to Moscow does not succeed, I will terminate that agreement too and ask them to leave." So the next day the inhabitants of Port Said awoke to see familiar silhouettes once more alongside the mole.

October 12, 1845 hours: A rare evening at home. The phone rang. Lieutenant General Sherif, Chief Aide-de-Camp to the President. A number of tanks have driven into Cairo, ignoring military police signals. There is a real threat to the President, Sherif says, because he is going to a meeting later this evening with members of the Assembly. General Sadek has already been told. I sped to my HQ, Only to learn that military police had already arrested the ringleader and taken him to Central District HQ. I went on there. General Sadek had arrived a few minutes before, and in less than half-an-hour we were joined by General Abdel Khabir, Commander of the Central District. The arrested officer was identified as Captain Ali Husny Eid, commander of a mechanized

company in an armored brigade stationed ten miles or so east of Cairo.

Sadek questioned him, with Khabir and I putting in questions from time to time. The captain's story: "My company was on alert against enemy airborne troops. I decided to train my men with a preparedness exercise. When we had finished that, about 1600 hours, I thought we might drive to Sayedna el Hussein mosque for *maghreb* prayers. We left our vehicles in the square and went in to pray. When we came out we were surprised to find military police surrounding us and arresting us."

At least it had the merit of being unusual. But it was full of holes which Eid was quite unable to bridge. Why did he have with him vehicles and men not of his own company? Why had he not told his battalion commander of his wish to exercise, so the usual security measures could have been taken? Why had he crashed through the military police point on the outskirts of Cairo, violating the standing order that no military vehicle or weapon could enter Cairo without a prior written order from GHQ? Did he, finally, regard it as normal to go to his mosque in an armored vehicle?

The captain's followers seemed, by contrast, honestly confused. He had told them they were on an exercise. They had set off in 12 armored personnel carriers. When they reached Cairo military checkpoint, the first seven had sailed through but the police had managed to halt the last five. The captain had then led them at high speed through the streets of Cairo, radioing confused and ambiguous orders. The commanders of four of the vehicles began to have serious doubts and halted. When

the captain reached the mosque square with his final three vehicles they had, as he said, gone inside to pray.

As his questioning proceeded, it became fairly clear Captain Eid was a religious maniac. He would break off his answers to recite the Koran, then launch into fervent denunciations of the Egyptian way of life, people forgetting their God, neglecting their religious obligations and so on. (Captain Eid was subsequently committed to a mental hospital.)

A worried General Sadek soon departed, saying he was going to report to the President. Watching him go, it seemed to me possible the President would recall my warning of April 23 that if Sadek insisted on controlling those two key departments, I could not answer for the security of the forces. I was correct.

October 16-18: To everyone's relief Sidky's mission to Moscow has been a great success. The Soviet's have promised to supply one squadron of MIG-23s, but only to arrive in the last quarter of 1973; one squadron of SU-20s, to arrive at the same time; and, most important, a brigade of R-17E ground-to-ground missiles (known in the West as SCUDS), with a range of almost 150 miles. The delivery date of this will be fixed early next year. We have begun to reconstruct the crucial alliance.

October 24: A crucial meeting of the Armed Forces Supreme Council. The President had ordered a meeting of the Armed Forces Supreme Council at his Giza residence at 2100 hours. General Sadek then said he wanted a meeting of the Armed Forces Supreme Council beforehand, in his office at noon. (It was also the day of my monthly meeting of field and staff commanders; we had to break off at 1130 hours.)

The noon meeting with Sadek lasted an hour. Almost every commander round the table spoke briefly of the situation as he saw it, the state of his forces and in particular their difficulties and problems. Sadek's contribution, in summary, was: "All I want is that tonight you tell the President the true situation. The President thinks I exaggerate your problems. He wants to hear the true position from you." Everyone said they would speak out.

From about 2030 hours we began to gather at Giza. Promptly at 2100 hours, the President opened the meeting with a long address:

"My meetings with the Soviet leadership in March 1971, October 1971 and February 1972 were at my request. My visit to Moscow in April 1972 was at the Soviets' request. On my April 1972 visit, I told the Soviet leadership the following:

ONE: "The problem will never budge politically unless we shift it militarily.

TWO: "It took the Soviet Union six months to prepare and equip India for its war against Pakistan. I ask you to do the same for Egypt. 1972 is an election year in the United States. While that is on, no solid agreement can be made between yourselves and the United States. Take advantage of the remaining months of 1972; supply me with what I need; and then negotiate with the new administration from a position of strength.

THREE: "I agree with your strategy to help the reelection of Nixon. It will be more fruitful dealing with him than with some new president whose eyes are fixed on the need to retain power for another eight years.

"In May 1972 Marshal Grechko came. He attended

the demonstration of the M-500 (MIG-25) and he had with him a communique about his visit already drafted by the Soviet Central Committee. They wanted to negotiate with the Americans from a position of strength, so I approved the statement. But I also gave Grechko a letter to deliver to the Soviet leadership. I told them I did want the M-500. I also wanted electronic warfare equipment. I made it clear to them, too, that I would not agree to any Soviet unit staying in Egypt unless it was wholly under Egyptian authority.

"On June 6, I received a message from Mr. Brezhnev, in which he said the situation vis-a-vis the United States remained as before. I told the Soviet Ambasador that I wanted a reply to the message I had sent via Marshal Grechko, and I repeated what I had said in it.

"On July 6, I was told the Soviet Ambassador had a reply and wanted to meet me. I met him on July 8. But when the Ambassador read his text it was vague and never even mentioned the message I had sent to the Soviet leaders. After he had finished, I told the Ambassador: 'Your message is totally rejected. My decision is to end the service of all Soviet advisers and units in Egypt, starting July 17.'

"Before making that decision public, I sent [Prime Minister] Aziz Sidky to Moscow to explain the situation and to suggest that a joint declaration be issued covering what was happening. Moscow did not agree; they said it was a unilateral decision and therefore should be a unilateral declaration. They still thought I was bluffing, despite Aziz Sidky's assurances that I was not. From July 17, as all of you know, my decision was carried out.

"On July 31 I received a message from Mr. Brezhnev. I

deliberately did not hasten to answer it. But on August 31 I did finally send my reply—ten points.

"The Soviets asked [Syrian] President Hafez el Asad to help in improving relations between us. At his instigation, I agreed to send Dr. Aziz Sidky to Moscow once more, and I think his visit has had two positive results. The first is that we have established relations with the Russians on a new basis: cooperation as friends, but with absolute equality and freedom of action. The second point is that the Soviet Union has agreed to supply us with more weapons. [The President read out the list I have already given.]

"By deciding delivery dates the Soviet Union still holds the reins in their hands. But at least they have demonstrated by this agreement a willingness to continue normal supplies. That is very important. I told them in my last letter of August 31 that I would take October 31 as the date of decision on our future relations. So the Soviets knew, when Sidky was in Moscow, that unless they changed their attitude I would cancel the treaty of friendship between us and withdraw the facilities they enjoy in our ports, all of which would mean our relations would then deteriorate further."

On the Soviet Union's general position, the President's remarks seemed self-contradictory to me:

"Detente, sealed between the Russians and Americans in Moscow at the May 20 summit, is now the dominant strategy of the Soviet Union. The cold war between the blocs is over, and detente will work for 20-25 years at least. But detente means that small powers like us will be crushed. The Soviet Union does not want us to go to war. They want us to reach a peaceful solution, because

they know war might drag them into confrontation with the Americans."

But he also said: "The Soviets are not sure we are going to fight. That is why they are reluctant to give us weapons. At all my meetings with them, the leadership has indicated this in so many indirect, insinuating ways: 'When are you going to fight? When are you going to act like men and liberate your lands?' At last they said that openly to Dr. Aziz Sidky. If they were in our position, they said, they would fight to liberate their country even if they had nothing but rifles. I am sure that, in private, they put it even more bluntly."

Yet the President also said the Russians had told Sidky that detente would never affect their relations with Egypt and that Soviet policy was to continue to support Egypt and to supply her with weapons.

He then turned to the alternative to war: "As for a peaceful solution to the conflict which faces us, my last proposals were very clear:

ONE: "We would declare a ceasefire during which Israel would withdraw its troops from the vicinity of the Suez Canal; our forces would cross to the east bank; and the canal would be reopened.

TWO: "The ceasefire would last for six months. If we had reached no final solution by then we would be free to end the ceasefire and resume the responsibility of liberating our occupied territory.

"But the Americans want to distort my proposals. They agree about the Israeli withdrawal, our crossing, and the reopening of the canal. But although they say that all issues could then be settled by negotiation, they want no time limit. And Western Europe cravenly agrees with them. That is not what I had in mind at all.

Without some sanction, Israel could spin out negotiations for 10, 15, 20 years. We would have lost everything. The main concern of America and Western Europe, the canal, would already be open. The world would forget our problem. We would have lost not just our own territory but the cause of Palestine forever."

Finally, the President tried to draw some lessons for the future: "We must cease to rely upon outside suppliers for our arms. We must be able to manufacture our own fighter-bombers and helicopters. We must be able to manufacture small fast naval vessels and equip them with the most powerful missiles. We must produce tanks and tracked vehicles. We must produce the most up-to-date electronic equipment—and in that field Britain and France are ready to cooperate with us." He then threw the meeting open for questions.

Gamassy (Chief of Operations): "What are the views of the Syrians and Libyans on the prospect of battle?"

Sadat: "Hafez el Asad is wholly convinced that anything we do will be an improvement on our present position, whatever the sacrifices. Syria will play their part in the battle; and they agree that action on the two fronts should be coordinated from Cairo. General Sadek is soon to go to Syria to work out the details.

As for Libya, everything they have is being readied for battle. They have put at our disposal a squadron of Mirages; 24 self-propelled 155mm guns; 12 120mm mortars mounted on tracked vehicles and 100 armored personnel carriers."

Wasel (Third Army): "The training and preparedness of the troops are high. But if we were to launch an attack under present circumstances, we would have to accept very high casualties. Let us not forget the enemy

has a continuous sand barrier, up to 60 feet high, with concealed firing positions along the top. They can sweep any attacking force. We must at least raise the sand barrier on our side until it matches or overtops the Israeli barrier. Then we could give covering fire.

Shazly: (Nobody except the President, Sadek and myself knew of the reinforcements promised by other Arab states. I decided to remind him, diplomatically, that now might be the time to call them.) "Mr. President, are you going to make a move to mobilize all Arab resources, or will the battle be the responsibility of the Confederation of Arab Republics—Egypt, Syria, Libya—alone?"

President: "The battle will be mainly an Egyptian one. The other Arab countries will stand by and watch at the start. Then they will find themselves in bad trouble with their own public opinion and their attitude will change." (I decided not to press the point, but to raise it privately later.)

Sadek: "We must remember that the enemy can strike our interior. We must also bear in mind that Israel, with the blessing of the Americans and perhaps of others I do not want to identify, might attack us at any time. They are all in favor of destroying Egypt and its armed forces, which now constitute a very considerable threat to Israel."

President: "I absolutely agree. The most suitable time for an Israeli strike would be just before November 7 this year [the date of the presidential elections in the United States]. Then, with a new administration, the world would forget about the aggression and start talking about a new ceasefire."

Khabir (Central District): So far as I can see, the armed forces have received nothing from the Russians which adds to their effective power. On the contrary, if we consider normal consumption and wear and tear, it is possible to argue that our capabilities are actually decreasing rather than increasing. In particular, our air force remains unchanged, with all the defects it has had for years. Isn't that an important factor to weigh before we decide on war, particularly one with the casualties we expect?"

President: "You clearly did not follow my earlier analysis. If I accepted any of that, I could never have made the decision of July 8 [to expel the Russians]. The issue facing us now is 'to be or not to be.' We cannot simply load blame onto the Russians. They have armed and equipped two entire field armies—with arms and equipment of their own choosing, certainly, but equipped nevertheless."

Khabir (returning to the attack): "If we resolve 'to be or not to be' we surely have to mobilize everything in order 'to be.' If we are to go to war, we need to mobilize everything in the country for the war effort, as they do in other countries going to war."

President: "The mobilization of the country is my responsibility not yours. Many people in this country even still doubt there is going to be a war. If we stay as we are, the internal front will deteriorate. We must accept the calculated risk."

Khabir: "Calculated risk? Why? Why not avoid the risk entirely?"

Nawal Said (Quartermaster General): "Is the object the liberation of the occupied territories or is it merely a

resumption of military activities so as to give you a better chance of a political solution?"

President: "I told the minister in August: Breaking the ceasefire."

Hassan (Vice President): "We might embark upon a limited offensive. But the uncertainties of battle are such that whatever we wished, it might develop into total, full-scale war. Even if it did not, we might succeed in the initial phase of our attack, but then we would undoubtedly be forced onto the defensive by the enemy. The upshot could be that the Israelis would be in a stronger position than they are now. They would still be in control of Sharm-el-Sheikh and most of Sinai, and might at that point claim rights to those areas. And what of us? We have to consider that most of our interior has no proper defenses against air attacks. The enemy air force could inflict heavy damage by striking there. Syria's air defense is even weaker. It would be extremely dangerous for Syria to go to war before it has completed its air defense system. We do not want to find ourselves screaming once more for the help of the Soviet Union—as we might well if, for example, we find our interior suffering severe damage."

President, angrily addressing Hassan by his first name: "Abdel Kader, you don't have to tell me what to do and what not to do. I am responsible for this country's independence and I know what my duties are. You must not interfere in something which is not your responsibility. I do not want to have to tell you again. Keep to your limits. You are a soldier, not a politician."

Fahmy (Navy), trying to calm the row: "Everyone believes the problem cannot be solved peacefully, and battle is the only solution. If there is debate about what

sort of battle, or when, or differing views, it is aimed solely at the preservation and protection of the country's interests."

President, rounding on him: "Are you still trying to defend Abdel Khader? Everyone can speak only within his limits. Everyone has authority for his particular responsibility, nothing more. I don't want to see anyone telling me what my job is or how to do it."

The situation was tense and there was a long silence before, more calmly, the President summed up the meeting: "We are confronted with a challenge. 'To be or not to be.' A partial solution has been presented to me [the U.S. peace proposals] and is still waiting for my approval. But I am not going to accept it. Other people might perhaps accept a partial solution, but I will never accept it. We will simply have to use our talents and our planning to compensate for our lack of some kinds of equipment. God bless you."

He left the conference room. We packed our briefcases and made our way to the waiting cars. It was after midnight.

October 26, midday: The President's secretary on the line. The President wanted to see me at 1530 hours at Giza.

Sadat did not waste words when I arrived. He had decided to dismiss General Sadek. I was to be totally responsible for the armed forces and their security from that moment—he glanced at his watch. I asked if Sadek knew this. Sadat said not yet. I asked whether he was going to tell Sadek, or wanted me to do it. The President said he would send his secretary to Sadek with the news in two hours, to give me time for the necessary security precautions.

He had also decided to dismiss General Hassan and General Abdel Khabir, Sadat said. After the row at the Armed Forces Supreme Council I was not surprised; nor could I reasonably argue. The disagreement had been so deeply held that the President might reasonably think it affected his own security. But when he went on to speak of dismissing also the Naval Commander, General Mahmoud Fahmy, and the Third Army Commander, General Abdel Muneim Wasel, I did protest. They were both good generals, I said.

Sadat rounded on me: "How can you say that? Didn't you hear what they said at the conference? I too used to think General Wasel was a good soldier, a sound man. But look what he said."

"Mr. President," I replied, "as a field commander General Wasel was only expressing his worry about the expected level of our casualties. That is his right. And what he said about the enemy's sand barrier is correct. We do have to take it into consideration. He is still a good man and a good soldier and I ask your excellency to give him a chance to prove it. As for General Fahmy, he is one of the most effective naval officers we have. His dismissal would be a great loss.

"As an army man you may know General Wasel," the President said. "But I know Fahmy. He is a man who likes praise too much, just like Sadek. Sadek discovered Fahmy's thirst for praise, and Fahmy discovered the same in Sadek. They showered each other with compliments and in the end they have both come to believe them. I know these men better than you do."

There was a pause. "Now," the President said briskly, "let us consider who is to be the new Minister of War." I

stayed silent, and after a few seconds Sadat spoke again. I'm considering Ahmed Ismail," he said.

I was appalled. "Mr. President," I broke in, "I have a history of disagreement with Ahmed Ismail going back more than 12 years, ever since we met in the Congo (now the Republic of Zaire). We have had bad relations ever since. It would be impossible for us to work together in harmony."

Sadat flapped his hand: "I know all that. But I can assure you he will seek a better relationship with you than Sadek did." I stood my ground, talking of my concern at anything which might disrupt the military situation while we were preparing a battle that would determine the destiny of our country for years to come. Sadat kept assuring me that nothing of the sort would ensue.

I rapidly came to the conclusion that his mind was made up. I could accept or resign. As we talked—our meeting lasted an hour—I had to make up my mind. I decided to stay. We were preparing a battle of destiny. For almost 18 months I had slogged as Chief of Staff and now the worst of my job, at least, was over. It would have been too much to leave the armed forces and the fruits of my labor to others. Besides, I said to myself, perhaps Sadat's assurances will be fulfilled. (As I shall relate, I had once had similar assurances about Ismail from President Nasser.) If they did not, and things became impossible, I could still resign. But the most persuasive reason was that, if I resigned now, it would be seen as support for General Sadek. It would be assumed I shared Sadek's view that we could not start a war now or in the near future.

I went back to my office to set in motion the usual precautions. At 2230 hours, General Ahmed Ismail phoned. The President had just received him and appointed him Minister of War. And the President had decided, Ismail said, to dismiss General Fahmy as Naval Commander and replace him with General Zekry.

The Catastrophe of Ismail

Ahmed Ismail Ali and I were utterly different people. I had already resigned once because of that. We had met in the Congo in 1960. I was in command of our contingent of the United Nations' forces. Brigadier Ismail arrived at the head of an Egyptian military mission to see what Egypt could offer the Congolese Army. By the time the mission got to Leopoldville (now Kinshasa), however, Lumumba, whom Egypt backed, had fallen. Mobutu had come to power with diametrically opposite policies. Ismail's mission was frozen. Instead of going back to Cairo, they hung around for two months and, having nothing better to do, Ismail began to interfere with my running of our United Nations contingent. Angry words passed until finally I swung a punch at him. News of the incident reached Cairo; his mission was withdrawn.

As career officers we of course met after that. But we tried to avoid each other, and relations remained icily formal. Then came 1967, which everyone thought had ended Ismail Ali's career. He was Chief of Staff in Sinai. Judging him, correctly, to have been one of those responsible for the shambles, Nasser had summarily

dismissed Ismail a few days after the war. But Ismail had friends, some of them close to Nasser. After a few days he returned to the forces. In March 1969, to general astonishment, Nasser made him Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces.

I resigned inside the hour; my letter to the Minister of War, General Mohammed Fawzi, was frank. With Ismail as Chief of Staff and myself as Commander of the Special Forces, our old tactic of avoiding each other would be impossible; yet we could never work together. Then I went home. On the third day, as the last in a procession of visitors all trying in vain to make me change my mind, President Nasser sent his son-in-law, Ashraf Marwan, with a personal message: "President Nasser takes your resignation as an act of criticism of him personally. It was he who appointed Ismail." I told Marwan what I thought of Ismail, repeated my view that I could not work with the man, but offered my assurance that my action was in no way intended as a criticism of the President. Marwan departed. A few hours later he returned. The President quite understands your view," he said. "He asks you to return to work on his personal assurance that General Ismail will never tread on your toes."

I went back to work—and, I have to say, President Nasser kept his promise. Ismail never even visited my special forces base at Inshas. No doubt in time we would have clashed. But Ismail only lasted six months. On September 9, 1969, an enemy seaborne force raided the northern sector of our Red Sea District, remaining ashore for almost a day while Ismail was all but unaware of their presence. Nasser fired him a second time.

For Sadat, searching for supporters among the military in the wake of his seizure of power in May 1971, Ismail Ali was thus an obvious choice. He hated Nasser. After Sadat plucked him from retirement on May 15, 1971, to become the new head of the National Intelligence Service, he identified wholly with Sadat. Now, as a replacement for Sadek, Ismail had even greater attractions. It could only add to Sadat's security.

Sadek, as I said, had been one of the three key men behind Sadat's coup. He had always believed that in consequence he should have a real share of power. He would, for instance, give his views frankly and publicly even if they contradicted Sadat's. And Sadek was popular with the troops—improving salaries and pensions, decorations, trips abroad, money and privileges for his entourage, the usual ways of courting popularity. In return he demanded and got total loyalty. To Sadat, still seeking to establish himself as an absolute ruler, Sadek must have seemed a threat.

General Ahmed Ismail Ali had no such potential. He was a weak man, alternating between submissiveness and bullying. His second dismissal in September 1969 had affected him deeply. He was more indecisive than ever. He shunned the responsibility of decisions, preferring to receive orders rather than give them. He was thoroughly unpopular with the troops, not surprisingly since his manner was uniformly brusque; and while caring nothing for the personal problems of those around him, he was a fairly devoted believer in nepotism when it came to his own family or the families of those who might help him. Such unpopularity was another virtue in Sadat's eyes. So, of course, was the fact that he and

the Chief of Staff were at loggerheads. (Sadat is a firm believer in divide-and-rule.)

The unforgivable point is that Ismail Ali was also a dying man. And President Sadat knew it. Ismail had cancer. After it killed him in December 1974, the autopsy report by the English doctors who had treated him stated that the cancer had been active for at least three years. (I saw the report as Ambassador in London.) So the disease was killing Ismail for at least a year before Sadat appointed him Minister of War and Commander-in-Chief. And Sadat has confessed he knew. In a speech in 1977, Sadat said he knew of Ismail's illness before and during the October War and had been told by doctors that Ismail was a very sick man incapable of making decisions.

That raises horrifying questions. Why did Sadat appoint a sick man at that most critical time? Could it be that he put his own ends above the vital interests of his country?

I regret writing about him as I do. But the truth must be told. Ismail was unfit for his job; and his weakness had terrible consequences for his country. The wickedness lies in the man who appointed and then manipulated Ismail, knowing as he did that Ismail was a dying man.

As it happened, in the 11 months we worked together before the war, Ismail and I differed little. We were both trying hard. Besides, there was little to differ about. Our plans had been laid. Of course we updated them constantly as information flowed in about the enemy or new units of our own became operational. But the core remained. In departmental matters, Ismail continued to

control the Defense Intelligence Department and the Officers Department; but he did allow me a hand in the Finance Department. In private he never tried to hide his dislike of me, but he never attacked me in public. We got along.

During the war itself, things were very different, as we shall see. But again the fault was Sadat's. Afterwards, of course, Ismail played his part in Sadat's campaign to discredit me. A British historian who had a long interview with Ismail after the war came to see me subsequently at the London Embassy and recounted how he had been advised not to mention my name in Ismail's hearing. But it proved impossible to talk sensibly about the war without doing so. Visibly upset, Ismail had suddenly poured out his dislike of me, amounting almost to hatred.

Yet at the end he felt guilty about that. In a last attempt to arrest his cancer, Ismail went to the Wellington private hospital in London in 1974. I visited him there. He knew he was going to die. Suddenly he said: "I know you have been the target of savage and unfair attack. It was always the President who wanted that. Even when we were making a documentary about the war the President ordered that your name and photograph be eliminated. I want you to know that I said to him: 'General Shazly is part of history. We cannot just ignore him . . . .' " I calmed him. I talked of God knowing the facts, and knowing what was in our hearts, the things one says to a dying man. Then I left, contemplating what men will do for even transient power, and mentally rehearsing prayers that I be spared the temptation.

Conspiracy

The first few days of Ismail's tenure brought the only item of our preparations he oversaw: the building of our rival sand rampart on the west bank of the canal. Our decision to provide covering fire from the west bank meant—as Wasel had reminded the President at that traumatic Armed Forces Supreme Council meeting—that we needed a rampart of our own higher than the Israelis' as a firing platform. (We actually began building a sand barrier in late 1969 to counter the Israeli one started 8-10 months earlier. The higher they went with theirs, the higher we would go with ours, although theirs was always higher and more complete.) For some time before his dismissal Sadek had been pressing without success for £E23 million from the contingency funds to finish this.

Now, a few days after Ismail's appointment, the cash was allocated. By the end of 1972 our engineers had built, not a continuous rampart, but 30 separate ramps along the five fronts, each about 70 feet high and containing almost 230,000 cubic yards of sand. Mammoth constructions, perfect firing platforms for our tanks and anti-tank guided weapons in the opening stages of the assault.

October 29, 1972, 1700 hours: Meanwhile the rumblings about Sadek's dismissal began. We did not have to wait long for proof that his views were widely shared. General Said el Mahy, Director of the Artillery Department, phoned to say that a young officer at the artillery school had publicly criticized the President. The commandant of the school had been explaining to the

assembled young officers why Sadek had been dismissed. (His text was a briefing hastily distributed by Sadek's successor.) "The President knows nothing of military matters," one of the young officers had said. Horror. But when an inquiry was hastily set up, the young man denied—I presume on prudent advice—that he had said it. His denial was accepted; the incident was gratefully closed. But far more serious rumblings were to come.

November 11, 1745 hours: Summoned to the President at Giza. Joined by the Minister of the Interior, Mamdouh Salem, then by Ezzat Suleiman, Deputy Director of the National Intelligence Service. A plot has been uncovered.

The affair had begun a few days before, when a captain in the Defense Intelligence Department stumbled on something which made him suspicious of a particular group of officers. Instead of telling his superiors, he had gone straight to the President. Sadat, having heard him, began to suspect the involvement of some Defense Intelligence Department staff in whatever was afoot, and turned to the National Intelligence Service to crack it. National Intelligence Service surveillance had confirmed that officers, some known to be pro-Sadek, were meeting—and with such security that they could not learn what went on at the meetings. By now thoroughly suspicious, the President decided to strike at the group even before having a solid case. So here we sat, listening to Ezzat Suleiman lay out everything the National Intelligence Service has learned about the organization.

Even its name, Save Egypt, proclaimed its naivete. The plain fact was that the group accepted Sadek's views.

They too believed that a certain power was trying to push us into war while we were unprepared; that this would lead to destruction of our armed forces, to the the fall of the regime, thence to political turmoil and so to the emergence of communism in Egypt and its spread throughout the Arab world.

I disagreed with the analysis. That was one cause of my difference with General Sadek. But Sadek and I had been friends for 30 years, since we were junior officers together. Not once had I doubted his courage or patriotism, and I did not doubt it now. I disapproved of what his adherents were doing; but I was morally certain Sadek was not acting as an agent on anyone's behalf. So I listened sadly as President Sadat launched into a denunciation of Sadek as a puppet in the hands of the Saudis. He was an agent of King Faisal, Sadat said, accepting cash, gold, expensive gifts, and in return, carrying out Faisal's orders. Mamdouh Salem hastened to confirm what the President was saying. I sat silent, in no position to refute the details, but silently recalling the letter Sadat had sent to Faisal only a year before, asking Faisal to treat Sadek as if he were Sadat himself. Had Faisal done just that?

When the three of us left the President at 2200 hours, we were under orders to arrest and question all suspects. We went to the headquarters of the National Intelligence Service and there I stayed until 0500 hours next morning when, having signed warrants for the arrest of military personnel involved, I left for my own office to have a couple of hours sleep before starting my normal day's work. The questioning was to be done by our military prosecutor, but in National Intelligence Service headquarters.

November 12: General Mehrez, Director of the

Defense Intelligence Service, was dismissed by the President. As the National Intelligence Service interrogation wound on, more names were mentioned, more arrests of military personnel required. In the middle of it all, I now had to go to Kuwait for two days for an Arab Collective Defense Council meeting. (I will recount that later.)

November 15, afternoon: When I got back from Kuwait, the questioning of those linked to Save Egypt was still proceeding. (With the departure of General Mehrez, the process had transferred to Defense Intelligence Department headquarters.) And worse was to come. Late that evening, the military prosecutor asked me to issue warrants for the arrest of General Abdel Khabir, lately Commander of the Central District; Colonel Omran, a divisional commander; Colonel Ahmed Abdelwahab, Chief of Staff of a division, and Lieutenant Colonel Mahmoud Essam, commander of a ranger group. Their names had been given by others, the prosecutor said; their involvement was almost certain. I gave my permission. They were arrested shortly after 0130 hours.

By now I was becoming alarmed. The situation looked more serious than I had first thought. I imposed strict security measures, including an immediate ban on all military movements.

November 16, afternoon: To Defense Intelligence Department headquarters. To my amazement, I was presented with the complete confessions of General Abdel Khabir and Lieutenant Colonel Adel.

It was hard to take the sight of Abdel Khabir, a colleague and senior commander only a fortnight before, under arrest and interrogation. His confession was what I would have expected of a brave man: he claimed full

responsibility in an obvious effort to save the others. Quietly, I asked him: "Is what you signed correct, and made of your own free will?" Equally quietly, he replied: "Yes." I beckoned the military prosecutor into another room. "I can see General Abdel Khabir is still in good shape," I said. "But I must impress upon you that it is absolutely forbidden to use force or threats. Over and above that, he and all the others are to be treated with respect and dignity." The prosecutor said he could give me his assurance that he was against any sort of violence or threats; and that none had been used to extract the confessions.

I read the statements again. They were damning. The organization had planned to strike the previous week, on November 9. It had been my daughter's wedding day; and they had known that everyone who mattered, including the President, would be at the ceremony that evening. They had planned to arrest us all in one operation. Only when they had learned how heavily guarded the ceremony would be had they postponed the coup.

As it happened, when I left Defense Intelligence Department headquarters that afternoon, I was bound for another wedding, that of Major Abdel Muneim el Hony, one of the Libyan Revolutionary Council whom I had met with Gaddafy. The ceremony was at the Shooting Club out by the Pyramids. President Sadat was already there, and I drew him into a corner and told him of the latest confessions. He left shortly afterwards, his host accompanying him downstairs. Suddenly the room was buzzing with people calling out: "The President wants you." By the time I had pushed my way downstairs he had gone, leaving orders I was to follow him. Without even letting my wife know, I set off for Giza, catching

the President at the door of the residence. For half-an-hour we paced back and forth on the steps while the President thought aloud.

His real worry was Sadek. Sadek's name had not been mentioned by the conspirators, but it was clear his thinking dominated their actions. Three questions followed. How subversive were Sadek's views? How many officers shared them? And where were they? (The President, after all, had relied heavily on Sadek's personal advice in approving the most senior postings.)

"He was deceiving me about who to choose," the President said, pacing up and down. "Planting his own men, eliminating rivals." He turned to me: "What is your opinion of . . ." and named an officer exiled by Sadek as a military attaché in Europe. He was a good soldier, I replied. (He had in fact been the armored division commander whom Sadek had not wanted to trust with 100 T-62 tanks.) "Bring him back," the President said. "Tomorrow, bring him back."

I thought his impulsiveness did credit to his heart but not to his head. "Mr. President," I said, "if you will permit me, I would advise postponing that for a time."

"Why?" Sadat asked.

"General Sadek accused anyone who disagreed with him of being a communist," I said. "I myself suffered from his comments and insinuations. But if, now, we start bringing people back it will be misinterpreted in the armed forces. Are we rehabilitating them, or bringing them back as suspected conspirators?"

The President nodded: "I think you are right. Let us postpone it."

We turned to the additional security measures to be taken in Egypt. When I left him, still pacing the steps, I

had my orders. It was another hour before I could drive out to bring my wife home from the wedding.

Hopes for the Future

November 13: In the midst of all that, I had to go to Kuwait for the latest Arab Collective Defense Council meeting. Having just witnessed what damage the burden of continuous preparation for war was doing to Egyptian society, I arrived in no mood to appease those who urged us onto everlasting battle while making no comparable sacrifice themselves. My report as Assistant Secretary General of the Arab League for Defense therefore said bluntly what I had wanted to say the year before.

I criticized the non-front-line states for their inadequate financial support. Since 1967 Egypt had spent £E4,125 million, if we counted material losses about £E4,500 million. In those years we lost 2,882 soldiers and civilians. Egypt's gross national product (GNP) was only 26 percent of the Arab world's GNP, but it paid 50 percent of the total defense bill. Yet since 1967 Egypt had received only £E566.2 million from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Libya combined—one-eighth of what Egypt had spent, without putting a value on the loss of life.

We needed two Arab defense policies, I said, short-term and long-term. Short-term, it was unfair and insupportable that some countries were allotting 22.7 percent of their GNP to defense while others, nominal allies, devoted only three percent. Each Arab country should devote to defense at least 15 percent of its GNP. If it would not spend that amount—because its population was too small to absorb it, or for any reason—it

should transfer the surplus to an Arab Defense Fund to support the efforts of the front-line states.

Long-term, I said, unless we created an arms industry on Arab soil, we would forever lag as far behind Israel as we were now. Israeli arms production, worth $90 million in 1966, had by 1972, risen fivefold to $428 million. In the same period Arab arms manufacture, now worth $93 million had stagnated.

To illustrate the gap, I spoke of our weakness in the air. I showed how the Israeli air force had the capacity to deliver 2,500 tons of high explosives a day. The combined air forces of the front-line Arab states, even in theory, could deliver only 760 tons. The reality—the short range of most of our aircraft, the low speed of those that did have endurance—would in practice cut even that total drastically. Without our own arms industry we would never bridge the gap.

I proposed we set up a collective arms industry. It should be independent of any single Arab state. Each country should finance it with two percent of its GNP for five years. Shares would be allotted *pro rata.* Any profits would be distributed only after five years. The industries within the organization should be located according to strategic, technical and economic criteria.

December 12: My plan bore its first fruit. The Arab Chiefs of Staff met in Cairo.

We agreed that the military obligations of the non-front-line states—the reinforcements they should send—would remain unaltered save for three changes. Saudi Arabia would, with Egyptian help, assign one squadron of Lightnings at once and another in 1974. Kuwait, again in cooperation with Egypt, would also assign one squadron of Lightnings at once, and another at a date to be

agreed. Libya would allot two squadrons of Mirage IIIs at once, and another at a date to be agreed.

We agreed that the military obligations of the non- percent of each GNP to defense and to allot any unspent surplus to the front-line states. We approved the plan for an arms industry financed by a two percent levy on each GNP for five years—the industry to be independent and operated on economic and commercial criteria.

That was, I still think, an historic decision. It gave concrete form to the rhetoric of the all-Arab struggle. No resolutions of Chiefs of Staff, nor yet of the Arab Collective Defense Council, are final. (Towards the end of January 1973 the Arab Collective Defense Council met in Cairo. It adopted the report of the Chiefs of Staff.) But the unanimous opinion of its top military men must slowly have effect on the Arab world. Six years later, it remains the case that some Arab states are not contributing 15 percent of their GNP to the continuing struggle. But at least there is now a yardstick against which they can be judged.

The Final Deal

February 1, 1973: I had achieved what I could with our Arab comrades. Our more immediate concern had now to be the rebuilding of relations with the Soviets which Dr. Sidky had begun in October. Fortunately, the Soviets were as keen as we were. A military delegation under General Lashnekov now came to Cairo. After a series of discussions, they left with an agreed list of our armament needs.

March 1973: General Ismail went to Moscow to sign

a new arms agreement based upon that list. Under the agreement, we would get:

—one squadron of MIG-23s, the Egyptian pilots to be sent in May or June to the Soviet Union for training;

—one brigade of R-17E surface-to-surface missiles (SCUDs) to be delivered within the third quarter of 1973;

—about 200 BMP (mechanized infantry combat vehicles), some to be delivered at once, the rest in the third quarter of 1973;

—some 50 MALOTKA anti-tank guided weapons (known in the West as SAGGER);

—one QUADRAT (SAM-6) brigade;

—field artillery, including the 180mm gun.

It was also agreed that the Soviet Union would send back to Egypt the four MIG-25 reconnaissance aircraft and the electronic reconnaissance and jamming squadron.

A great relief. Relations with the Soviet Union improved overnight.

July 9: And the Soviets kept their promises. Hafez Ismail, the President's National Security Adviser, told me today he was going to Moscow. He asked what problems I had within the armed forces that should be raised with Brezhnev. I told him that so far deliveries were on schedule; but the Soviet Union had still not sent the R-17E brigade, nor returned the MIG-25s and the electronic reconnaissance and jamming squadron.

July 12: General Samakhodsky (who had replaced General Okunev as Soviet military liaison officer) informed me that General Sapkov would arrive next day with five officers to prepare the arrival of the R-17E brigade's equipment. Within eight to ten days, Samakhodsky said, 63 Soviet experts would be arriving—26 to

hand over the equipment and leave at once, the other 37 to train our personnel.

July 14: Sapkov and Samakhodsky in my office, to discuss the formation and training of the brigade.

July 17: A GHQ conference: my assistants and departmental directors present. The formation of this new missile brigade in the shortest possible time, I said, was a challenge to us. We could not afford to fail. After that, the meeting was marvelous. We worked out a way of setting up an entire brigade—officers, men, light weapons, transport, communications—in two weeks.

The plan worked. While the missiles were approaching Alexandria docks in the last week of July, we were setting up the brigade and selecting caves for missile storage well out of sight of satellite reconnaissance.

August 1: The brigade, complete with missiles, started its training.

Nor was this unique. Our pitch of training was such that in a few months we absorbed without difficulty all the Soviet equipment that now flooded in. Apart from the missiles, the trickiest to absorb was the BMP infantry vehicle, because it was wholly new to us. But by the first days of August 1973, it was clear we would have at least two battalions of these, 80 vehicles, in action by early September and the remaining 120 vehicles, in another three battalions, ready by the beginning of October.

We were as ready as we were ever going to be.

Chapter Five: The Lull Before The Storm

On August 21, 1973, at 1400 hours, a Soviet passenger liner entered Alexandria harbor on its regular run from the Syrian port of Latakia. I was at the harbor to meet it. As the passengers surged off, suitcases and bundles in hand, to greet their relatives waiting beyond Customs, I was looking for six men. When I saw them I think we all had a slight shock. It was the first time most of us had seen each other in civilian clothes. Looking as casual as we could, we shook hands and climbed into waiting cars to drive to the Officers' Club in the center of town where their rooms were ready.

At 1800 hours we met again, this time at Egyptian naval headquarters in what was once Ras-el-Tin palace. Eight Egyptians were assembled there, including: myself, General Ismail, General Mubarak (Air Force), General Fahmy (Air Defense), General Fouad Zekry (Navy), General Gamassy (Operations), and General Fouad Nassar (Defense Intelligence Department). The six Syrians were General Mustafa Talas (Minister of Defense), General Yusuf Shakoor (Chief of Staff), General Nagy

Gamil (Air Force and Air Defense), General Abdelrazzak el Dardary (Chief of Operations), General Hikmat el Shihaby (Director of Defense Intelligence), and Brigadier Fadl Hussein (Naval Commander). The eighth Egyptian was General Bahieddin Nofal. He was Secretary General of the group the other 13 of us comprised, the Syrian-Egyptian Armed Forces Supreme Council. We were meeting to review our readiness for war and to choose its date.

Our talks lasted through the next two days. By the morning of August 23 two documents were ready for signature by myself and my Syrian counterpart, Shakoor. We had resolved that we were at last ready to go to war along the lines defined in our existing plans. And we were ready to tell our political leaders that two periods in the coming months, September 7-11 or October 5-10, would provide a suitable D-Day. All we asked was that Presidents Sadat and Asad tell us of their decision to go at least 15 days before the date of attack.

For those 15 days, we had reviewed not merely our military preparations but the elaborate structure of disguise and deception—security, secrecy, operational deception, strategic deception, political deception—that we had prepared to fool the enemy during that final build-up. None of us thought our schemes would be wholly successful, but they might cost the enemy at least a few days' notice. That was why even the fact of this Syrian-Egyptian Armed Forces Supreme Council meeting had to remain secret; why we had resorted to passenger liners, false passports and lounge suits. Too many of the random events in the coming weeks would fall into a pattern if it were known this meeting had preceded all of them.

As our talks wound to their close on August 23, Shakoor took me to one side and murmured: "We must start by taking the strictest security measures for the 14 of us in the room. That must include a self-imposed ban on flying, even internal flights. The hijacking of an aircraft with one of us aboard would create terrible problems." Even so, as we dispersed early on August 24, some of the Syrians did fly home, via Saudi Arabia. Others sailed back to Latakia. Some stayed on to relax for a few days.

We did not have long to wait. If our leaders were to choose the earliest of our suggested dates, sometime between September 7-11, our requested 15-day notice required we be told by August 27, less than a week after our meeting. When that date passed we all knew the war would start on or just after October 5. The countdown would begin sometime around September 20.

It was time to call our reinforcements—though without revealing just how close the battle was. On September 16, under an assumed name on a false passport, I flew secretly to Algeria. On the morning of September 17 I once again met President Boumedienne. I told him of the decision to go to war and asked for the military support he had promised. He asked the date of the battle. I told him it was not finally settled but would definitely be within the three months he and I had agreed.

"And the combat readiness of your forces?" he asked. I said it had never been so high.

"What about the Syrians?" he went on. I thought it was more or less the same as ours, I said.

"If that is so," Boumedienne asked, "how come the Israelis four days ago shot down 12 Syrian aircraft for the loss of only one of their own?"

I was frank: "My own opinion is that the Israelis have air superiority not just over the Syrians but over us as well. Our plan is devised to operate within that constraint. All the same, they should not have won a victory that big. I rather think our brothers the Syrians must have made the mistake of falling into a well-prepared ambush. But those are the sort of tragic errors that are committed in battle. We must just accept them and learn from them."

We had a long talk. I still remember Boumedienne's final comment: "The decision to go to war is a hard one; but the decision to remain in our present humiliation is just as hard." He promised as I left that he would contact President Sadat almost at once to clear the final details.

That same day I flew on to Morocco, to be met at Casablanca airport by the Egyptian Ambassador. We drove to Rabat to dine at the residence of Colonel Delemy, the King's *chef de cabinet* for military matters. I said I needed to see the King privately and urgently. A meeting was arranged for 1800 hours the next day.

This time, I was relieved to see, my arrival at the palace met with no ceremonies. Colonel Delemy escorted me as far as the King's office and left. King Hassan locked the door and came back to his chair. We sat. My problem, facing him, was to know what to ask. So many things had happened since our previous meeting. The F-5 squadron we had agreed would come to Egypt had attempted the coup against him and all its pilots were under arrest. The promised tank brigade had already been sent to the Syrian front. In the end, I told the King of our decision to go to war and asked if he could spare any units apart from his tank brigade and that grounded squadron.

"Brother Shazly," Hassan said, "this is the most pleasant news I have ever heard in all my life. I am delighted that we Arabs are at last going to challenge the enemy, break out of our present humiliation. Certainly we will share in the battle, and with more than I promised at our last meeting. We have, as you say, sent our tank brigade to Syria. But to your Egyptian front we will send any one of our infantry brigades. You may arrange it with our staff."

So, all next day, September 19, I toiled with Moroccan GHQ reorganizing the brigade to be sent, working out the ammunition it should bring, and how it could come by ship to Alexandria. Then I hit a snag. When I went back to King Hassan next day, September 20, I suggested the brigade needed another seven to ten days to prepare and could leave Morocco by October 1. To my consternation, the King replied: "We think it is better we should give the men leave to see their families before they go to a war from which they may not return. Besides, I think we need rather longer than you suggest to prepare the brigade. And Ramadan is coming in a week. I suggest they leave in the first half of November." Without virtually giving away our likely assault date, I saw no way of arguing against that. All I could do, before I left for home the next evening, September 21, was to ensure so far as possible that the brigade could if necessary leave in a great hurry.

While I strove through September 21 to ready the Moroccan brigade, the final political decision was made. Early the next day, September 22, the Ministers of War and Chiefs of Staff of Egypt and Syria were given the date: October 6. (Sadat told Ismail, Ismail told me.) The 14-day count-down began immediately.

I arrived home at 0130 hours on September 22. At 0900 hours my regular monthly meeting of staff and field commanders began. It was our 26th meeting—as it turned out, my last. Scanning their alert faces, listening to their talk, with all the while the secret knowledge that in 14 days many of them would be crossing into Sinai on the hardest—for some the last—mission of their lives, all this gave me a strange feeling as I sat there. There was nothing to be done. Everything had been considered, everything planned. I was confident our crossing would succeed. We all accepted what I had drummed into these commanders for months: that our crossing would pass as an historic triumph into the annals of war, and every officer and man who had helped in it would talk of it with pride for the rest of his days. What more was there to say? They would be told the secret in due time. I ran the meeting briskly. The crossing was never even mentioned.

We broke up as usual at 1630 hours. It was like passing through some mental airlock then to go, at 1900 hours, to a two-hour meeting chaired by General Ismail to hear the final plans of the Syrian Air Force.

This feeling of living in two worlds deepened through the days ahead. It was, in a sense, what our deception plan demanded. The foundations of our deception were our cover stories for the massing of men and the moving of units and equipment to the front. I have already sketched our ideas on both. Every autumn since 1968 the Egyptian Armed Forces had held 'strategic exercises' on an increasingly elaborate scale. This year's exercise would start on October 1 and last a week, mounting to a climax shortly before its ending on October 7. As for our mobilizing of men, that was routine. So far in 1973,

we had mobilized reservists 22 times—sometimes a single group, sometimes many—for anything from three days to two weeks. It was well known we were merely testing and perfecting our new mobilization system. On September 27 (D minus 9), we announced another mobilization, the twenty-third in nine months. The reservists would be released, we said, on October 7. On September 30 (D minus 6) we called up another batch. To lull suspicion, on October 4 (D minus 2) we announced the demobilization of the first batch of September 27, but in reality demobilized only 20,000.

That routine of mobilization, so carefully established keys to the success of our deception. The other was that, throughout the exercise, our main combat units made no irrevocably aggressive move. They did not need to. For three or four years we had kept five infantry divisions stationed by the canal, each deployed in defensive formation over a sector 10-12 miles wide. They remained in those positions. We relied on the enemy to monitor this and to conclude that the divisions were not massing for an assault. Our secret was that each division was to storm the canal over a sector only three to four miles—and those assault sectors were within each division's existing defensive sector. During our years of preparation, so many trenches had been dug that the defensive lines of each division could act not only as the concentration area before the attack, but could also hold the reinforcements and bridging equipment. So each division had to move only very little before the attack.

But the strategic exercise would not begin until October 1 (D minus 5). By then the count would have been ticking down for ten days. We needed 15 days not just because so much could be done only at the last minute—

deploying artillery along the canal, moving bridge sections, ferry components and crossing equipment to their final concentration points, for instance—but because we had planned to make all sensitive movements by night (those that, if detected, really would give the game away). Hence we needed 15 nights, with a peak of activity over the last five.

A good deal of our activity remained unavoidably public, however: the mobilizing of the reserves, for instance. Enemy reconnaissance would undoubtedly detect that our exercise was significantly bigger and more elaborate than in any previous year. At this point the rest of our deception plan came into play. Military moves by the canal would point in an aggressive direction. Our deception plan supplied a series of actions and incidents, military and political, at international as well as national level, that would reveal that the Arabs were not bent on war when pieced together by clever enemy analysts. The plan worked so well that after some thought and with some regret I have decided its workings are a valuable secret we should preserve, except for the glimpse I feel able to give here. But at a personal level, the plan was very simple. All of us in the senior echelons had to live two lives, preserve surface normality while working in secret on the last preparations. Two worlds.

The secret was so tightly held that I could afford no unusual behavior even inside the office. I was Chief of Staff preparing for the annual exercise on October 1, no more. I cancelled no social, administrative, even private gathering for fear someone would guess. I even managed to fool my wife . In fairness, thirty years married to an army officer had inured her to phone calls from

my office saying I would be away with the troops for a few days. I made my secret trip to Morocco and Algiers without letting even her know I was leaving the country. She told me afterwards how astonished she had been to hear the news of our assault on the radio.

The elaborately-planned program of "normality" proceeded. On September 27 (D minus 9), we took the most sensitive of our public steps: mobilization. To disarm everyone, that same day General Ismail had invited all Cabinet ministers to spend the day at GHQ, to be briefed on its organization and work. We reckoned the enemy would never believe a military machine on the verge of war would devote ten precious hours to an "open day". The ministers, I recall, were particularly impressed by the office equipment, mostly Western computers and mechanical data-processing machines we had ordered in 1972 but only recently had installed. (Some of the machines were the heart of our new mobilization system.)

Next morning, September 28 (D minus 8), the Minister of War and I were among the large military party who made the by-now-traditional annual visit to the tomb of the late President Nasser. We followed it with a ceremony at GHQ. That same evening I went to the Arab Socialist Union's annual remembrance. Again it was by careful calculation that President Sadat's speech was low-key, restrained, very different from his fierce speeches of the past few months.

Between such public events, my days were a sequence of meetings with the commanders of each of the services, running through the details of their plans for the last time, checking against last-minute hitches.

October 1 (D minus 5) marked the beginning of the

final phase. Our strategic exercise began. That morning our GHQ moved to the war operations room, Center Ten. (Even this was nothing unusual: we had moved to Center Ten for our annual exercise for some years past.) The only remaining formality was the last meeting of Armed Forces Supreme Council, convened at the Ministry of War under the President. It was comparatively brief. Each commander was asked formally to confirm his preparedness to carry out the mission assigned to him. Each in turn described his mission, the plan to carry it out, his state of readiness and finally gave his agreement that he was ready. This was the necessary prelude to the formal War Order the President would now sign for Ismail. There was no other business. After a few encouraging words, the President left.

At least, with the exercise under way, nobody would expect me to attend diplomatic cocktail parties. Back at Center Ten I concentrated over the days ahead on three topics. The progress of mobilization, and the stealthy movement of the crossing equipment and our reinforcements to the front, were two areas where it was particularly important that our minutely-detailed schedules be followed without error. My other main concern was to monitor the success of our deception plans through continuous checking of the enemy's responses. Inevitably, though, a host of minor concerns cropped up almost hourly: problems with the vast communications net we were setting up; checking the defenses of Center Ten itself; endlessly revising the text of the early communiques we would issue in the battle. (The communiques would accuse the Israelis of having started hostilities—a lie, but one the enemy had employed against us in 1967.)

That day, October 1, we began at last to spread the secret. Our two key field commanders, General Saad Mamoun of the Second Army and General Abdel Muneim Wasel of the Third Army, were called to Center Ten and given the order: prepare to carry out Plan Badr on October 6. For the next 48 hours only they were to know this. Their divisional commanders could be told on October 3 (D minus 3), their brigade commanders on October 4 (D minus 2), battalion and company commanders on October 5 (D minus 1) and their platoon commanders and men not until D-Day itself, six hours before H-Hour.

But our final step that day was the irrevocable one. Our submarines sailed to their appointed battle stations. The captains did not know their mission: their sealed orders were not to be opened until a few hours before H-Hour. But there was no fail-safe procedure. From the moment they sailed, the boats were forbidden to use their radio. There was no way whatever of recalling them or cancelling their mission. With their sailings, though the crews did not know it, the war had effectively begun.

Fortunately for morale, few even in Center Ten ever knew how close we came to postponement, nevertheless. On October 3 (D minus 3) Ismail flew to Damascus for a few hours. When he returned, he told me privately that the Syrians had requested that D-Day be postponed for 48 hours. Ismail had refused—using my predictable reaction as his excuse. "You must think of the Egyptian front," he reported having said. "Think of General Shazly's position if we agreed to a postponement. We cannot hope to keep the secret much longer. He would lose the surprise we have been working so hard for so long to achieve. Before any decision we would have to seek Shazly's military opinion, and I simply do not think he

would agree." The Syrians had been persuaded, Ismail said, only with the greatest reluctance.

The enemy was not the only group we tried to mislead. There were also the Russians. That was difficult. Apart from instructors with the R-17E brigade, they still had several experts with other units. They would see our preparations. Nor would our cover story of an annual strategic exercise convince them for long. There were too many differences this year, differences we might hide from enemy electronic or satellite reconnaissance but scarcely from experts in our midst.

It was on September 29 or 30, a week before the assault, that the President instructed us to give the Soviets the vaguest possible outline of what was afoot. We decided to play it down. The Director of Defense Intelligence Service, General Fouad Nassar, was instructed to approach the Chief Soviet Liaison Officer, General Samakhodsky on October 2 (D minus 4) and tell him we had information Israel was preparing a raid. We did not yet know where or when. Samakhodsky was to be asked if Moscow could provide further details. On October 3 and again on October 4 (D minus 3 and D minus 2) Nassar was to heighten his news, telling Samakhodsky we were now certain it was going to be a large-scale raid, possibly accompanied by a major air strike. Samakhodsky appeared to accept Nassar's story, but by October 3 and 4 he must in fact have been extremely suspicious. Too many things were going on. Their experts in the armed forces must have been reporting back. Their experts in Syria must have been reporting similar preparations. I suspect they got confirmation from satellite reconnaissance.

It is possible they had a tip-off from Presidents Sadat or Asad. At any rate, it was quite clear to us by October 4 (D minus 2) that the Soviets were virtually certain war was imminent.

What we had not expected, what took us totally by surprise, was the Soviet response. Late on the evening of October 4, those Soviet experts and their families living in Cairo were rushed to the airport and flown to Moscow. By midday next day, Friday October 5 (D minus 1) the mini-evacuation was complete. Many of their experts were left behind, among them those training our R-17E brigade. And, as a hasty telephone call to Syrian GHQ confirmed, the Soviets were not evacuating their personnel from Damascus. I am still baffled. But when I was awakened with the news that Thursday evening, my immediate reaction was concern. So far, to our amazement, the enemy had not guessed the truth. If anything could now persuade him, this panicky action would.

As if that were not enough, the hours of the Soviet evacuation saw the only serious breach of our own security. It was early evening on October 4 when we in Center Ten learned to our horror that our national airline, Egyptair, had suddenly cancelled it flights and was busily arranging the dispersal of its aircraft to refuges outside Egypt. We were aghast—and furious when we were told it was on the order of the Minister of Aviation. We intervened to have the orders cancelled as swiftly as we could. By the early hours of next morning, October 5 (D minus 1), flights were back to normal. But surely the enemy would have learned of this and drawn the correct conclusions? (We had no time to inquire into the cause of this gross breach of security. Clearly, somebody had

told the Minister of Aviation or perhaps even a director of Egyptair of the date of our attack. Who? On whose authority? I still would like to know.)

By now, I could stand it no longer. That Friday morning, I left the subterranean world of Center Ten and its telexes and telephones and radar screens for a visit to the front. When I got to Third Army field HQ, I found General Wasel revising an inspiring address he was proposing somehow to deliver to the troops in the early minutes of the assault. He showed it to me and asked what I thought. I thought it was excellent, if a trifle long. "But I don't think anyone will actually listen to it," I said. "With the battle raging and men being killed around them nobody is going to be interested in a speech." His idea was worth adopting, though. "I suggest we distribute transistor loudspeakers the length of the front and during the assault they broadcast only one phrase 'Allahu-Akbar'." "God is the Greatest", the battle cry of Moslem warriors in the early days of Islam, these days the litany of anyone about to attempt something big or difficult. "When the men hear that, they will take up the cry and soon the whole front will be shouting *'Allahu-Akbar'* in unison. The weaker will be swept along by the stronger and more aggressive."

Wasel was enthusiastic: his only problem was a shortage of loudspeakers. From Wasel's HQ I called the Director of the Armed Forces Public Relations Department: "I want you to provide transistor loudspeakers. Before ten tomorrow morning, 20 should have been delivered to the Third Army and 30 to the Second Army." (Ten for each assault front.) Blankly, he said he did not have that number. I told him to draw them from any unit not part of the Second or Third Armies and, if he was

still short, buy some from the nearest market. I gave him three hours, then he was to call me at Second Army field HQ.

"Wasel had things well under control in the Third Army. Relieved, I drove north to Second Army HQ. It was just as calm there. General Mamoun had a minor problem with GHQ engineer units who were arriving as reinforcements, but a quick phone call to General Gamal Ali, the director of engineers resolved it. I told Mamoun of the loudspeakers he could expect—while we were talking, the public relations director phoned to say they would be there on time.

There seemed no more for me to do. I decided to have a last look at the Bar-Lev line. Saad Mamoun and I went to a forward observation post right on the canal. Stealthily raising my head, I peered across. There opposite me, no more than 300 yards away, rose one of the most powerful of all the forts: Ismailia East we called it; though we knew its Israeli name was FORT PURKAN. It dominated the central sector, blocking the spinal road east into central Sinai from Tasa to the enemy's main Sinai air base at Bir Gifgafa. Even on our western side of the canal, the fort dominated the Ismailia-Cairo road. It was a fulcrum of the enemy's defenses. Through the telescope I strained to see signs of activity, any evidence that the enemy was alerted. There was none. I relaxed. The next time I saw that fort, I was convinced, it would be rubble in our hands.

"Well, Saad," I said, handing the glass back to Mamoun, "it looks as if the enemy is still not alerted. What about our own junior officers and men. Surely they suspect something?" Earlier today, battalion and company commanders had been told; but the troops would not

know until tomorrow morning. Despite all our cover stories I suspected some of them must have already a shrewd idea what was afoot. Mamoun took the same view. "Suspect, yes," he said. "I'm certain some must guess the truth. But nothing solid. Only the few of us actually supposed to know have anything solid. One of my brigade commanders came up to me yesterday—just a few hours before he was due to be briefed, actually—and in a very low voice he asked me if it was really just a crossing exercise or the real thing. I asked if it mattered. Wasn't he preparing for the exercise as if for war? But I'm certain some of them guess."

I got back to Center Ten late that afternoon. I was more certain than ever that we were going to win. With less than 24 hours to go, there was little the enemy could do now even if they did guess.

I decided to go to bed early. I was tired and I said firmly to myself: "You must have a good rest tonight. You have a big job tomorrow and sleep will be the last thing you'll get." After a light dinner, I went to my bedroom just across the corridor from the Operations Room. But it was not easy to sleep. The boots of the guards and duty officers rang on the concrete passage, and all the details of the canal crossing unreeled across my brain. As I lay there, I knew the battle had already, secretly, begun. Our submarines were at their war stations. Beside the canal small groups of engineers were launching their rubber dinghies to paddle silently across the canal and block the outlets to prevent use of the enemy's burning oil slick. Elsewhere along the bank, our long-range patrol groups were being paddled over to slip into Sinai deep behind enemy lines. Lying in my concrete cell, visualizing

all this and everything that would follow, I found myself engaged in a dreamlike conversation:

First Shazly: "What a beautiful senario. If we could have filmed the battle it would make a $100 million movie."

Second Shazly: "Why don't you arrange it?"

First Shazly: "That's silly. We would have to tell the film director everything. Our sectors of attack, our timings, the role of each unit. Every secret we have been keeping even from our own field units."

Second Shazly: "But by tomorrow morning all those junior officers and men will have been told. Why don't you call a director tomorrow and give him the job?"

First Shazly: "Much too late. He would need at least a day to take in the full scenario and then another three or four days to arrange film crews."

Second Shazly: "Who told you that?"

First Shazly: "Nobody told me. It's just logical."

Second Shazly: "It's never too late. At least some of it could be filmed. Call a director first thing tomorrow."

First Shazly: "He would want facilities. A helicopter, I shouldn't wonder. Two, even. Our men would know nothing about them and shoot them down. What an end. We could give strict orders, but how could we be sure they had got through to everyone? Besides, if our men get it into their heads not to shoot at helicopters they will not fire at enemy helicopters either."

Second Shazly: "So what? The benefits of the film would far outweigh the risk of losing a helicopter. You always talk of calculated risk. Why don't you regard that as calculated risk?"

First Shazly: "This is different. It has nothing to do with the battle or its outcome. It would be just for the record, for history."

Second Shazly: "But history is important. Our children and grandchildren and their grandchildren must know what their forebears did, right or wrong, if they are to draw lessons."

First Shazly: "All right, so it is important. But divulging secrets of a battle beforehand to anyone is an enormous risk. I just can't see it as a calculated one . . ."

I must have slept, though it seemed as if in some part of my brain the two bickered on, because at intervals some particularly harsh tramp outside my door would bring me to the surface to find the "conversation" had taken a fresh tack:

First Shazly: "What is the meaning of the Soviet move to pull out their experts only 24 hours before the war?"

Second Shazly: "Maybe they don't want to get involved and want to signal to the world they have clean hands. It might also mean they don't agree with our action and this is their way of protesting. What is significant is that they have even removed those three vessels from Port Said."

Second Shazly: "Yes, we no longer need their direct military support. But we certainly need their policital support. It must be very embarrassing for the President. I wonder what he is thinking right now?"

First Shazly: "Maybe at this moment he is deciding to cancel our orders."

Second Shazly: "Impossible."

First Shazly: "Impossible? Why? Because of those submarines you cannot contact? The world would accept a few missiles and the sinking of a ship or two if they were the price of avoiding a war."

Second Shazly: "That might be true internationally.

But what of the effect on the nation? We have charged our men with fighting spirit, the desire to avenge 1967. At last, after so many defeats, they have the capacity to win. If we don't give them the chance now, our fighting spirit could die for generations to come."

First Shazly: "You are talking as a soldier. Politicians think differently. Remember what President Sadat said: 'You know nothing about politics.' "

Second Shazly: "Of course I remember. That doesn't mean the President is right. He can think whatever he wants. OK, perhaps I am simple. I'm not Machiavellian. I do believe in the old-fashioned virtues. That is part of being a soldier. But wise political decisions come from a balancing of factors, some of them contradictory. And surely the nation's morale, its self-respect, its pride are the most important factors of all? Man is the creative element in the national patrimony. Leaders sitting over a humiliated people, without pride in themselves, would be silly to think they could achieve anything."

First Shazly: "You are still thinking as a military man. The real question is: what will you do if the President orders the cancellation of the operation?"

Second Shazly: "I will not answer such a silly question."

First Shazly: "You are afraid to answer it."

Second Shazly: "Yes, I am. I want to sleep. We have a big job tomorrow. We must get some rest . . . ."

Photos 1 through 5 cover training before the battle.

1 Opening passages through the sand barrier using water pressure

2 View of the passage cut in the sand barrier

3 Pulling four wheeled carts across the sand barrier

4 Pulling semi-heavy weapons across the sand barrier

5 Egyptian soldiers climbing the sand barrier

Shazly inspecting the rubbles of the Bar-Lev line, October 8, 1973

Egyptian soldiers cheering General Shazly after the successful crossing on October 8, 1973

Welcoming Podgorny during his visit to Egypt, May, 1971

The meeting of the Arab Collective Defense Council (ACDC): General Shazly and Prince Hamad Ben Isa, Crown Prince of Bahrein, Defense Minister of Bahrein

General Shazly on assuming his post as Egyptian Ambassador to Great Britain, 1974

General Shazly at the command post of the Second Division Commander, Brigadier Abu Seeda, October 8, 1973

Chapter Six: War

Saturday, October 6

At 1300 hours President Sadat, accompanied by General Ahmed Ismail, arrived at Center Ten and went directly to the Operations Room. We had been at our places since early morning. The seats of the Supreme Command were on a low dais. The commands of each of the armed forces were stationed by their communications consoles and operations maps around the hall. Dominating us all was the map wall, its glass screen updated minute by minute to show at a glance every detail of the situation on both fronts. The background noise was a buzz of telephones, clatter of telexes, and quiet voices trying to mask their tension.

H-Hour, the time when the first wave of infantry would rise over our sand ramparts, scramble to the water's edge with their rubber dinghies and land on the other side—perhaps the longest journey of their lives—was set for 1430 hours. But even as we waited, willing

ourselves to remain calm, so much was already in train. Naval, artillery, ranger units, engineer reconnaissance parties: all were adjusting their last minute preparations.

Methodically the pilots of our fighter-bombers were strapping themselves in, connecting their life-support systems, running through cockpit checks, while the armorers wheeled empty trolleys from under their loaded wings. The clocks high on the Operations Room wall registered 1350 hours. The telephones on the air force command desk buzzed as bases reported: "Preparing for take-off." I suddenly pictured them up there in the sunlight. Sliding out of the gloom of the blast hangars into the white of the sun, silhouettes black against the glare, the clean lines of their wings broken by the armaments hanging from them, then the noise, the dust, exhausts shimmering the baking landscape as they rolled in glinting lines to the ends of the runways, slowly pivoted on their nose wheels and, the noise opening to a roar, accelerated to take-off. . .

At precisely 1400 hours, 200 of our aircraft skimmed low over the canal, their shadows flicking across enemy lines as they headed deep into Sinai. For the fourth time in my career, we were at war with Israel.

Their passing was all our artillery had been waiting for. We had massed more than 2,000 guns behind our lines. Now our high-trajectory pieces, the howitzers and heavy mortars, began to pour shells up and over onto the Bar-Lev forts and minefields and barbed-wire entanglements. It was 1405 hours. Under cover of the barrage our first men set off across the canal.

Engineer reconnaissance teams paddled over to check that the outlets for the inflammable liquid had been blocked by last night's raids. At the same moment, our

first men scrambled over the enemy ramparts—commando groups heading beyond the enemy's front line. Half-a-mile or so behind the sand barrier, the enemy had heaped individual sand ramps as firing platforms from which tanks could sweep those who had clambered over the first barrier. Our commandos, laden with portable anti-tank weapons, raced to get to the ramps first.

Along the western shores of the Bitter Lakes and Lake Timsah, it was quieter. The noise of the barrage could be heard in the distance. Our amphibious brigade—20 tanks, 80 armored personnel carriers, a thousand men—splashed into Bitter Lake and set off for the eastern shore. At almost the same moment, a company of infantry set off on the shorter voyage across Lake Timsah in a smaller fleet of ten amphibious vehicles.

While our howitzer and mortar barrage kept the enemy infantry pinned in their shelters, the rest of our artillery—the flat-trajectory pieces—deployed into firing position. At 1420 hours, they opened direct fire against the Bar-Lev strongpoints. The 4,000 men of Wave One poured over ramparts and slithered in disciplined lines down to the water's edge. The dinghies were readied, 720 of them, and a few minutes after 1420 hours, as the canisters began to belch clouds of covering smoke, our first assault wave was paddling furiously across the canal, their strokes falling into the rhythm of their chant *"Allahu Akbar. . . Allahu Akbar. . . ."*

Down at Lake Timsah, the amphibious infantry company had just landed in Sinai. In the desert ahead of our assault, the first commando groups had seized their ramps and were setting up their anti-tank weapons. They were just in time. The enemy tanks were moving up.

The enemy, at last, was activating their plan Schovach Yonim.

* * *

We knew the details of the enemy plan to defend the canal. Schovach Yonim was staff-college stuff, very traditional. They had divided the Suez front into three sectors—northern, central, southern—each sector encompassing one of the three possible routes of attack across Sinai.

—The northern sector defended the direction of Kantara-El Arish.

—The central sector defended Ismailia-Abu Ageila.

—The southern sector defended against a thrust from Suez to the passes of Mitla and Gedy.

—Within each sector, defense was based on two lines plus a reserve:

FRONT LINE: Along the canal. The 35 Bar-Lev forts and strongpoints. Between the forts at hundred-meter (110-yard) intervals, firing positions had been built for tanks.

SECOND LINE: Three to five miles behind the canal. Three battalions, 40 tanks to a battalion. One battalion to each sector.

RESERVE: Held 12-20 miles behind the canal. Three brigades of tanks, 120 tanks to a brigade minus the battalions forward in the second line. In effect, each brigade—one to each sector—was divided: 40 of its tanks forward, the remaining 80 held in reserve.

ALERT: The second line moved up to its firing positions at the water's edge or the ramps just behind it. The reserves moved up to the second line. The front-line defense would then comprise the brigade of infantry in the Bar-Lev forts, plus 120 tanks in three tank battalions.

The second line would be the remaining 240 tanks of three armored brigades. Any further reinforcements would have to come across Sinai.

SPEED OF RESPONSE: We estimated the enemy could counter-attack with sub-units the size of tank companies or battalions within 15-30 minutes of H-Hour. Major counter-attacks of brigade strength could be launched about two hours from H-Hour.

To neutralize this force we were putting across the canal five infantry divisions. They were crossing on the widest possible front, virtually the length of the canal. But our assault would concentrate in five sectors, each sector the responsibility of a division. From north to south:

—18th Division to attack and then defend along the Kantara-El Arish axis.

—2nd Division to do the same on the Ismailia-El Tasa axis.

—16th Division along the Deversoir-El Tasa axis.

—7th Division along the Shaloufa-Gedy Pass axis.

—19th Division along the Suez-Mitla Pass axis.

Moreover, across the Bitter Lakes and Lake Timsah we were sending the amphibious brigade and an amphibious company.

The three northern divisions constituted the Second Army. The two southern ones were the Third Army. To think of them simply as infantry divisions would be misleading, however. Each division had to be prepared to hold its bridgehead against powerful enemy armor. We had therefore reinforced each one with a brigade of tanks (three battalions); one battalion of self-propelled SU-100 anti-tank guns; and an anti-tank guided-weapon (ATGW) battalion. On top of which the infantrymen

themselves had every portable or draggable anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapon they could manage.

* * *

It would be an historic encounter: the first combat between the essentially World War Two concept of armor and the infantry weapons of the next generation. As the reports now began to flood into our Operations Room, we learned minute by minute how the combat was going.

1430-1445 hours: Our first assault wave has landed. 4,000 men are astride the sand barrier between the strongpoints. The boats, each manned by two men of the engineers' boat battalions, are returning. For five minutes or so, clouds of dust have been sighted as the first enemy tanks race toward the canal. In many cases our commandos are already at their sand ramps before them. And our men perched on the sand barrier can begin to fire down on the approaching vehicles. But the main burden of repelling this first armor lies with our own tanks and heavy anti-tank weapons and anti-tank guided weapons firing over the Bar-Lev line from our ramparts on the west bank.

Under cover of the fire, which also continues against the strongpoints, engineer platoons begin to ferry their pumps to the far bank to begin the task of scouring the 70 passages through the sand barrier. Our plan allows them only five to seven hours.

At the Bitter Lakes, our amphibious brigade has begun to land on the east bank.

Our aircraft are returning from the first strike. Because of their short range all the targets were in Sinai: enemy airfields, SAM sites, electronic jamming stations and military headquarters. The strike has cost us five

aircraft. (Those were to be our total losses up to 0800 hours on October 7.) Our pilots fly home through our SAM belt along corridors.

On the west bank, Wave Two of the infantry is preparing. The next ten minutes will reveal whether the tensions of battle will destroy the intricate scaffolding of the crossing operation. One man in each boat in the first wave carried a sign with a luminous number on it—the number of his boat—which he stuck in the enemy bank as a landing marker. Beside the sign, others in the boat unrolled rope-ladders from the summit of the rampart. It is vital the boats ply precise routes—partly so each wave is not parted from its predecessors, but also because our engineers have to work undisturbed in gaps between the ferrying. Between each boat within a company we left a 25-yard gap. Between companies we have 200 yards; between battalions 400 yards; between brigades 800 yards. Between divisions, in effect between each bridgehead, there is as much as nine miles. In these gaps within each division our engineers have to open passages, assemble ferries, light bridges and heavy bridges; string them across the canal and then operate them. The spacings are tight.

But Wave One is across. In the wave of jubilation that sweeps the Operations Room, the President leaves with General Ismail to take a rest.

1445 hours: Our system works. Wave Two has reached the enemy bank to the minute at 1445 hours. Successive waves are now scheduled to arrive every 15 minutes.

1500 hours: The first strongpoint of the Bar-Lev line is taken. The first enemy prisoners fall into our hands. The first wave of enemy air strikes arrives. Our SAM batteries shoot down four aircraft in the first minutes.

1515 hours: Wave Four has landed. Wave Five is ready. Our bridgeheads are still barely 200 yards deep. But with Wave Four we have put 20 infantry battalions—800 officers and 13,500 men complete with portable and hand-dragged support weapons—into Sinai. The artillery duel continues between enemy forces and our guns on the west bank ramparts, but increasingly the assault infantry are sharing the burden of repelling the enemy attacks.

1530 hours: Unperturbed by the din, our engineers report such progress with the scouring of passages that our bridge battalions are given notice to prepare to move from their concentration areas to the canal assembly sites.

1600 hours: Further waves of enemy air strikes. Another toll by our SAMs. More of the Bar-Lev strongpoints fall.

1615 hours: Wave Eight has landed. We now have ten infantry brigades across—1,500 officers and 22,000 men with all their weapons. The five divisional bridgeheads are organizing behind the lines of steadily advancing infantry. Each bridgehead now stretches five miles along the canal and penetrates rather more than a mile into Sinai. Covering fire from the west bank continues, but the main burden of repelling enemy armor has been taken by our assault forces. Our artillery switches its fire to targets deeper in Sinai. Our forward assault infantry can act as target spotters. Our long-range patrol groups, infiltrated into Sinai last night, are preparing to disrupt the arrival of enemy reinforcements.

1630 hours: Ten engineer bridge battalions drive in long columns to the canal edge and begin to splash their bridge sections into the water. Simultaneously the engineer units responsible for assembling 35 ferries move

to the water with their prefabricated components.

1645 hours: As soon as the bridge sections are bobbing in the water, the engineer battalions begin preliminary assembly of two or three sections at a time. Some bridges will be ready much faster than others.[5]

1700 hours: The engineers start to assemble the ferries. More Bar-Lev strongpoints have fallen to us.

1715 hours: Preparations begin on the east bank for marshalling of tanks and vehicles. Military police have crossed in the dinghies with the latest waves of infantry laden with signs coded by number and by color. They start to lay these out to signpost the routes for vehicles coming off the ferries or bridges. We are coming to the end of this phase of the crossing.

1730 hours: Wave Twelve of the initial assault, the final wave, is across and over the barrier. In three hours we have shipped over the canal five reinforced infantry divisions—2,000 officers and 30,000 men— with all the weapons they can handle; plus the men and equipment of five anti-tank guided weapons battalions.

The opening phase of our assault has been a total success. Each division now holds a semi-circular bridgehead, five miles along the canal and from two to two-and-a half miles deep into Sinai. Now everything depends on how soon our engineers can open the way for tanks and heavy artillery to join those embattled infantry.

1750 hours: Taking advantage of the onset of dusk, our helicopters drop four commando battalions deep inside Sinai. The units will assemble and move into battle under cover of darkness.

1800 hours: Our tanks, anti-tank guns and all other vehicles in Priority One crossing category begin to move from the concentration areas to their assigned crossing points.

1815 hours: The engineers have virtually completed assembly of the ferries. They should be able to start shipping our tanks across the moment the breaches are open.

1830 hours: A triumph. The first breach is open. An exhausted engineer platoon has managed it in four hours. A magnificent achievement. At the bridgeheads, our infantry can match it. Each bridgehead is now just over three miles deep. Almost every Bar-Lev strongpoint still holding out is now cut off from hope of rescue through the coming night.

1830-2030 hours: All passages through the sand barrier have been opened, except along the sector in the far south of the canal where the sand turns to mud, impossible to clear. So we have 60 passages instead of 70. That means we will also lose the use in that sector of the four ferries and three bridges—two heavy, one light—which would have pushed equipment through the breaches. But, everywhere else, what feats our engineers have achieved.

The 31 ferries are working at their maximum. Our tanks and Priority One vehicles snake in long lines back from the crossing points. Our bridges are fully assembled and span the canal. The engineers are embarked on the final phase, jockeying them into position, securing them and laying the ramps up and through the breaches. Liaison officers of the Crossing Command take up station on the east bank to guide the streams of vehicles to their assigned routes. At 2030 hours, the precisely scheduled two hours after the breach had been cleared to receive it, the first bridge is open. The first of that division's 200 tanks dip down to the water's edge and grind their way across, the empty pontoons of the bridge reverberating to the screech and clatter of their tracks until the water-

way resounds to the din. When the news came through the Operations Room telephones, I recall I told myself firmly that I stuck to my original estimate: we could judge the success of the crossing only after 18 hours. But a part of my mind whispered to me we had won the first round.

2030-2230 hours: Over the next two hours all bridges are opened (except for the three balked by mud in the southern sector). In eight hours our engineers have managed a staggering achievement:

—blasting 60 breaches in the sand barrier, scouring out more than 117,000 cubic yards of sand;

—building eight heavy-duty bridges;

—building four light bridges;

—assembling and operating 31 ferries.

The visible climax of that achievement comes at 2230 hours, when traffic at last flows over the canal by every one of those paths. By now the artillery duel between the two sides is spasmodic. But the enemy air strikes continue—by now concentrating on our bridges. Foreseeing this, we have positioned our SAM batteries accordingly. By 2230 hours our air defenses have shot down 27 enemy aircraft.

2230 hours, October 6—0800 hours, October 7: By 0100 hours on Sunday morning, October 7, 800 tanks and 3,000 other pieces of equipment—all Priority One vehicles in four of our five divisional bridgeheads—have crossed the canal. Only the far southern sector remains a problem. The crossing in the southern sector was not at a standstill but was moving very slowly. The passages were opened, but the slippery ground was causing the trouble.

Supported at last by armor, our infantry advance

through the early hours, pushing the bridgeheads out to five miles east of the canal. It is no picnic. The enemy's armored formations are disorganized, reduced to disarray. But we note through the night hours that commanders of sub-units, even individual tanks, fight on. They are evidently made of better stuff than their senior commanders. Twice, groups of enemy tanks managed to break through our infantry lines to reach the water's edge and bombed our bridges and ferries, inflicting significant damage. But it was a hopeless struggle. With RPG-7 portable anti-tank missiles and RPG-43 anti-tank grenades, our infantry fight back. Before sunrise the few surviving tanks are in retreat.

Meanwhile our engineers hasten repairs. Modern military bridges are built of interlocking sections, so it is usually just a question of removing damaged segments and slotting in new ones—exhausting work, but taking no more than an hour. Through the night, to foil the enemy air strikes we anticipate at first light, we move our bridges. It is to give us the freedom to do this that we have scoured 60 holes in the sand barrier, while assembling only eight heavy and four light bridges. Each bridge can be located at any one of five spots. The 31 ferries, being mobile, merely switch routes to accommodate the shifts.

Sunday, October 7

By 0800 hours the battle of the crossing had been won. The three armored brigades and one infantry brigade defending the Bar-Lev line had been virtually annihilated: 300 of the enemy's 360 tanks destroyed; thousands of men killed. Our losses were five aircraft, 20 tanks, 280

killed—2.5 percent of the aircraft we deployed, two percent of the tanks, 0.3 percent of the combat troops. In 18 hours we had put across the canal 90,000 men, 850 tanks and 11,000 vehicles.

The enemy forces were in chaos, effectively without armor in the tactical zone. That, paradoxically, was now the issue which faced us. The Defense Intelligence Department estimate had forecast the main blows of the enemy's mobilized reserves within H + 6 to H + 8 hours. This morning, 18 hours after our assault, there was no sign that the enemy's reserves had yet joined the battle. So the question confronting us was: "When will the enemy deliver their main counter-attack, the 8th or the 9th?"

For both sides, Sunday was a race to prepare for that big battle. The very success of our deception operations had handed the enemy some advantages in this race. The principal benefit was that our deployments were fully revealed: the five fronts; the heavily-reinforced infantry division in each; our tactics at the perimeters; the caution of our steady moves forward; the nature, density and effectiveness of our SAM and anti-tank guided weapons. The enemy could plan their counter-attack on fairly full knowledge. Had their reserves been available in the later stages of our initial assault, by contrast, they would have attacked in considerable ignorance of our plans and of what our infantrymen could achieve.

To be fair, the relative lull that Sunday enabled us to do three things. We all but abandoned the attempt to operate bridges in the far southern sector. Instead, we used Sunday to send the tanks and heavy weapons destined for the 19th Division in that sector across the

bridges of 7th Division to the north. Meanwhile, the divisions within each army group widened their bridgeheads to narrow the nine-mile gaps we had left between them in the initial assault. (And I snatched a few hours to go home for a hot bath and change of clothes, my first night at home since October 1, my last till December 12.)

In 24 hours we had put across the canal 100,000 men, 1,020 tanks, and 13,500 vehicles—the largest first day crossing in world military history. For the record, here are the details:

—32,000 men in rubber boats,

—1,000 men in amphibious tanks and carriers over the Bitter Lakes and Lake Timsah,

—4,500 men in tanks and vehicles over ferries,

—1,500 men over light bridges,

—61,000 men over heavy bridges.

	SAILING	ON FERRIES	OVER HEAVY BRIDGES	OVER LIGHT BRIDGES	TOTAL
TANKS	20	200	800	-	1,020
VEHICLES	100	750	12,150	500	13,500

Our other task through Sunday was to organize our administration on the battlefield. Our men had crossed with no more than 24-hours food, a little over four pints of water, and all the weapons and ammunition they could carry or drag. Now those 100,000 men and their 1,020 tanks and 13,500 vehicles had to be fed, replenished, re-equipped. But the administrative machine to do this was disorganized. Virtually all administrative units down to Priority Five had crossed. But casualties and the problems in the southern sector had led to confusion. Units were living from hand to mouth.

Sunday may have been a relative lull in the battle zone, but enemy air strikes continued and elsewhere in Sinai our special units were in action. Our amphibious brigade had headed east from the Bitter Lakes and divided to push simultaneously through the Mitla and Gedy Passes. Its mission was to disrupt the enemy's southern sector command and communications system. Their southern sector HQ was at the entrance of the Mitla Pass. At 0810 hours on Sunday it was surrounded and under heavy fire, while other elements of our brigade were raiding nearby radar and electronics stations. The Gedy force pushed through the pass and drove eastward into Sinai. The ranger groups landed by helicopter just before last-light the day before were also in action, ambushing enemy convoys rolling westward and in the process apparently causing some panic among their reservists who had been told nothing of our successes. The climax came in the early hours next morning, when our Gedy force launched a daring raid on the enemy air base at Bir-el-Thamada before returning successfully to our own lines.

Monday, October 8

I made my way to the front to discuss the operational and administrative situation with the field commanders.

Our bridgeheads were consolidating. Five division strength bridgeheads were coordinating into two of army strength. Second Army bridgehead, incorporating the 18th, 2nd and 16th Divisions, stretched from Kantara in the north to take in Deversoir in the south. Third Army bridgehead, incorporating the 7th and 19th Divisions, ran from the Bitter Lakes to a point east of Port Tewfik at the extreme southern end of the canal.

Each was now more than six miles deep. And we now held all the forts of the Bar-Lev line except two, the furthest north and the furthest south, though the latter was encircled and certain to fall soon. The weak point in our lines was the 20-25 mile gap (roughly corresponding to the eastern shores of the Bitter Lakes) which remained between the two army bridgeheads. Moving sideways to bridge this and link the the two armied would have to be carefully done. Most of the gap was outside the protection of our SAM batteries.

The enemy had used Sunday to equal purpose. Hundreds of tanks had moved into Sinai. The 300 destroyed in his three forward armored brigades had been replaced, though the brigades' casualties had been such that it would take some days to restore them as fighting units. Five wholly fresh armored brigades had also poured into Sinai. By this Monday morning, the enemy had reorganized into three groups:

—Three armored brigades under General Bren Adan covering the northern sector.

—Three armored brigades under General Arik Sharon in the central sector.

—Two armored brigades in the southern sector under General Albert Mendler.

In number our forces looked equal enough. The enemy's eight armored brigades had 960 tanks: Centurion, M-48 and M-60, all with the 105mm gun as main armament. We had 1,000 tanks: 200 T-62s with 115mm guns: 500 T-54s and T-55s with 100mm, 280 T-34s with 85mm, 20 T-76 amphibious tanks with 76mm. The truth behind these figures was that the enemy now had considerable superiority.

There were three reasons. The first was that in open

country none of our tanks except the T-62 could match the enemy's 105mm gun. The second was our continuing weakness in the air. Tanks without air-cover are sitting ducks. The third reason was that to bolster our infantry in the initial assault our armored formations had been dispersed among them. Half our tanks were organized in battalions of 31 tanks apiece and permanently attached to infantry brigades. The other half were in brigades of 100 tanks and temporarily attached to infantry divisions until they were able to make their own defenses impenetrable to armored counter-attack. Our armor had little chance to maneuver. The enemy could use their tanks as tanks; ours were self-propelled anti-tank guns. This was in no way due to ignorance on our part. It was deliberate policy to cover our own weaknesses and deny the enemy benefit of their strengths.

Over the next two days this paid even more handsomely than we had expected, thanks to the enemy's slowness to learn. We had assumed they would swiftly realize our tactics. We had also foreseen their best response: to take advantage of their mobility to concentrate against one of our sectors an armored force big enough to break through a single bridgehead. (We had worked our responses we thought would defeat that strategy, of course; but it remained the enemy's best policy.) To our amazement, as Monday morning wore on, it became clear the enemy was instead making the cardinal error of frittering their resources.

That morning an armored brigade attacked 18th Division lines, while another brigade attacked 2nd Division. Both attacks were broken. On Monday afternoon, the same futile pattern. Two armored brigades launched a concerted attack against 2nd Division in the

direction of El-Ferdan. Another brigade moved against 16th Division in the direction of Deversoir. The attack against 2nd Division was totally annihilated. Their losses against 16th Division were only slightly less heavy.

As I drove to the front early that morning, however, those attacks had not begun and we were anticipating something altogether more serious and concentrated. I drove first to Second Army HQ, thence to 2nd Division, then on down to Third Army HQ, ending my tour by visiting 7th Division. I was heartened to see the morale of the men. Many had not slept for two nights but, as ever, victory was a tonic. As I drove by, many of them, referring to my orders for the crossing, waved and shouted: "Directive 41, we did it" and "Directive 41, marvelous guide."

Striding around his advanced HQ, the Commander of 2nd Division, Brigadier Hassan Abu Saada, shared his men's spirits. He was confident that, elated by what they had already achieved, they could beat off any attack the enemy might mount. Buoyed by his optimism, I spared myself the luxury of a few minutes to redeem a private promise. Peering across at the enemy fort we called Ismailia East the previous Friday—seventy hours, a lifetime ago—I had promised myself I would visit it when it was in our hands. Brigadier Saada's men had taken it a few hours before I arrived. What a strange feeling it gave to enter it at last. *"Alhamdu Lillah, Allahu Akbar"* —"Thanks be to God, God is the Greatest"—I said as I stepped through its gates.

Only a few hundred yards to the south lay four tragic reminders of the price of such victories. Four of our tanks destroyed in error by our own forces. The incident had happened only a few hours before. The 2nd Division and 16th Division had been closing the last gap between

them. A platoon of three tanks from 2nd Division was nosing south; a similar force from 16th Division was heading north. Cresting a ridge, they came face to face at 500 yards. Their reflexes were so heightened that all six opened fire instantaneously. Two of the three tanks on each side got direct hits. It was a tragic tribute to their battle skills. The survivors, alas, were shattered. (The survivors in such cases very often need psychiatric help. The sense of guilt is too great to be borne.)

As I drove south past the Lakes, the roads steadily clogged as we approached 7th Division's main bridge until, 300 yards back, the jam was solid. I got out and walked, to find the 7th Division Commander, Brigadier Badawy, at the bridge. We carried on in his car. It was soon apparent that in this southern sector, despite Sunday's lull, things had not yet stabilized. We came upon a lieutenant with his platoon of tanks, quite alone and with no idea where the rest of his unit was. We found infantrymen out of food and water, some even walking back to the west bank to fill their flasks. Most of the trouble could be traced back to our inability to operate bridges (due to mud and water current problems) in 19th Division's sector further south. The result was that 7th Division's already crowded bridges were overloaded with 19th Division's traffic as well.

This could be sorted out. But the state of our bridges became of real concern, indeed, after I spoke with the chief engineers of the Second and Third Armies. In the assault we had laid ten heavy bridges (the two in the southern sector were laid but not operating) and kept only two in reserve. After the crossing was complete we had withdrawn one heavy bridge from each division and put it into reserve. I now learned, however, that

enemy air strikes had damaged so many of our bridge sections that we had lost the equivalent of three complete bridges. We were reduced to four bridges in reserve.

There was no immediate crisis. But we had to think of weeks, even months, of battle ahead. If the enemy should fly wave after wave against our bridges that would undoubtedly cost their air force dearly. But equally undoubtedly some would get through.

It suddenly occurred to me that we could lay three virtually impregnable bridges over the canal if we just tipped rock and sand into the water. The chief engineer of the Third Army, the first expert I saw after having the idea, was positive it could be done. When I asked how long it would take I was amazed when he said, given enough bulldozers, a week. It was late afternoon as I drove back to Center Ten, cheered by what I had seen, confident our strategy was working, but certain we needed those causeways as soon as possible.[6]

Tuesday, October 9

The enemy has persisted in throwing away the lives of their tank crews. They have assaulted in "penny packet" groupings and their sole tactic remains the cavalry charge. In the latest manifestation, two brigades have driven against 16th Division. Once again, the attack has been stopped with heavy losses. In the past two days the enemy has lost another 260 tanks. Our strategy always has been to force the enemy to fight on our terms; but we never expected them to cooperate.

Wednesday, October 10

Our troops continued to improve their positions. Elements of the 1st Infantry Brigade, attached to 19th Division, captured Ayoun Mousa south of Suez, first step in a calculated series of moves down the Sinai coast.

But there was no room for complacency. At 1645 hours 2nd Division reported an attack on its left flank by an enemy tank battalion backed by mechanized infantry. The enemy has at last switched tactics. Their tanks have split into small groups, making good use of the terrain and following the strict rules of minor tactics. With some success: the force has penetrated a mile inside the bridgehead. Darkness fell before the enemy was finally driven back.

The underlying vulnerability of our position was disagreeably confirmed by the other news which reached us late that evening. Our 1st Infantry Brigade had lost 90 percent of its men and equipment. I was incredulous. I simply could not understand how it had happened. Not until I sent a liaison officer to the scene did I learn: having captured Ayoun Mousa, the brigade had been ordered to advance through the night of 10/11 to capture Sudr, the next stepping stone down the coast. The brigade commander had taken it upon himself to set out a few hours before sunset. The inevitable followed. In open country, outside the protection of our SAMs, the brigade was routed by the enemy air force. Not a single enemy tank or fieldpiece fired a shot. The decisiveness of the encounter was a reminder, if we needed one, of how open our ground forces were to air attack the moment they left our SAM umbrella. We picked up the pieces: fortunately, the

brigade's casualties proved much smaller than the first panicky reports had suggested. But the mauling had destroyed it as a fighting unit for several days.

Thursday, October 11

My second visit to the front. It was by now clear that the main enemy pressure was against our central sector. I wanted to discuss this with the Second Army Commander, Mamoun, and the Commander of the 2nd Division, Saada. Neither, I found, saw reason to budge from their confidence of Monday. Second Army could hold its ground against the most concentrated thrust the enemy could mount. As an insurance policy in the light of yesterday's new tactics, wheeling to roll up the whole army from the flank. I phoned the order to our engineers to supply Second Army with 10,000 anti-tank mines at once.

What did worry us was the continuing confusion at the bridges. Our Crossing Command had functioned admirably through the crucial hours of our assault. Its subsequent failures stemmed from the fact that the Command's authority in each division had been vested in that division's Chief of Staff. But as each Chief of Staff and his senior officers had moved forward inside the bridgeheads, crossing control had been progressively delegated to junior or even non-commissioned officers. The result was a series of traffic jams with everyone arguing priority. The remedy, I resolved, was to put all crossings under an independent command, answerable directly to me. I gave General Saleh Amin a group of very senior officers and set him to organizing Second Army crossings. Brigadier Munir Sameh was given the staff and task for Third Army.

I was back in Center Ten by 1630 hours, calmer than I had been since our assault began. The objective of The High Minarets—the President's reiterated objective at so many Armed Forces Supreme Council meetings—had been achieved. We had a foothold in Sinai. It was not impregnable. No position is impregnable against a sufficiently determined assault, as our own crossing had just proved. But ours was so defended that, to dislodge us, Israel would have to pay a price they would almost certainly find unacceptable.

I got to the Operations Room to learn General Ismail wanted to see me. His question was the one I had feared. Could we not build on our success to develop our attack to the passes?

* * *

So began the first catastrophic blunder by GHQ from which all other blunders followed. First some theory, then some figures.

For planning purposes, we had always assumed that the enemy would penetrate our bridgehead and try to roll up our positions from the rear. It is, after all, the classic tactic. So is the defense to the maneuver: powerful reserves held in readiness to counter the enemy thrust, while the front-line forces re-deploy to meet the new threat. Invariably, the main reason why defensive lines collapse after penetration—the Maginot line in 1940, the Siegfried line in 1945—is an absence of mobile reserves. It is impossible to be strong everywhere. It is reserves—tactical, operational, in the last resort, strategic—that a commander counts on to halt an enemy penetration. A cautious commander might keep as many as a third of his forces in reserve. A commander taking risks

might content himself with holding back only one-fifth. But accepted doctrine would be that reserves of less than that are acceptable only in special circumstances and for short periods.

The fact underlying everything which followed was that, in order to repel enemy counter-attacks on the scale and with the speed that our worst estimates had forecast, the bulk of our armor had been sent to the front, at the expense of our strategic reserve.

Egypt began the war with 1,700 tanks. We massed 1,350 on the Suez front, dispersed 100 to guard our Red Sea coast and various targets in the interior, and kept only 250 as our strategic reserve. Moreover, that 250 included the 120 tanks of the Presidential Guard, which as ultimate guardians of the regime could only be used in an absolute emergency. Not all the 1,350 tanks allocated to the Suez front had gone into Sinai. The commanders of our two field armies had been authorized to cross with 1,020 of them. The other 330 were to be kept as our operational reserve west of the canal, ready to destroy any enemy penetration. They could not be commited to battle without the prior permission of GHQ. So our armored forces were:

—Front line: 1,020 tanks.

—Second line: 330 tanks.

—Reserve: 250 tanks.

The picture was now somewhat worse. The week of war up to and including October 13 had cost 240 of our tanks. Our front-line strength was down to 780. The same battles had cost the enemy 610 tanks; 300 under our first assault, 260 from their *kamikaze* charges of October 8—9, and then a final 50 lost over October 10–13. (Their losses fell sharply due to a switch to more

cautious tactics on October 10). The difference was that the enemy had the reserves to restore their forces not once but twice. They had replaced the 300 lost in our first assault and the 260 lost over October 8–9. So against our 780 tanks the enemy now deployed about 900. That ratio was ample for our defensive purposes, so long as we still had our reserves. But we had nowhere near the superiority needed for attack.

* * *

After the war the international media wrote what they evidently thought were complimentary things about me: tough, aggressive, dashing and so forth—even, so help me, professional. I suppose I might have been flattered had the epithets not been adduced as the reason why, it was alleged, I was in favor of a "quick thrust" to the passes even before October 14. The logic escapes me. One may be aggressive; one may have risked one's life for one's country. But why should that predispose one to gamble with the future of the armed forces and the fate of one's country? (I would dearly like to know who briefed the media. That there were briefings I am tolerably certain: the reports followed rumors circulated inside Egypt.)

The truth is quite to the contrary. From the moment Ismail broached the idea of developing our attack to the passes, I opposed the idea passionately, continuously, and in front of many people. The argument began in Ismail's office in Center Ten that Thursday afternoon, October 11. I opposed the idea for all the reasons I had advanced to Ismail's predecessor through the summer of 1971 when I had fought and won the case for a limited assault. I repeated to Ismail what I had said to Sadek and then to Ismail himself when he took over as Minister

of War on October 26, 1972: "The enemy air force is still too strong to be challenged by our own. And we do not have sufficent mobile SAM units to provide air cover." To Ismail now I added: "Let us learn the lesson from what happened to the First Infantry Brigade when it was caught for even a couple of hours without air cover. It was routed by air attack alone."

Friday, October 12

First thing in the morning, Ismail returned to the topic. Now he gave a reason: to reduce enemy pressure on Syria. Again, I opposed him. Our attack would neither succeed nor significantly relieve the pressure on the Syrians.

"Look," I said, "despite their losses the enemy still has eight armored brigades out there in front of us. The enemy air force can still cripple our ground forces as soon as they poke their noses beyond our SAM umbrella. We have proof of that. We don't have enough QUADRATs (SAM-6) to give mobile protection to our forces in the open. Advance and we destroy our troops without offering any significant relief to our brothers the Syrians."

At midday, the Minister returned. "It is a political decision," he said. "We must develop our attack by tomorrow morning."

1330 hours: Orders to advance had been prepared. They were taken to the army commanders by GHQ liaison officers: General Goneim to Second Army, General Taha el Magdoub to Third.

1530 hours: Saad Mamoun, Second Army Commander, phoned me from his advanced HQ. "General, I resign," he said. "I cannot operate under such conditions. It is impossible to fulfil the orders you have just

sent." A few minutes later, Wasel called from Third Army; his objections stopped short of resignation, but only just. I made no secret of my own objections, or of the fact that I had been overruled. Then I went back to Ismail, arguing that to ask field commanders to do something they had both now told us, in advance, they could not do was to risk disaster. We decided they should come to Center Ten immediately for consultation.

1800 hours: The conference began. Myself and the two field commanders pressed our objections. Ismail overruled us. It was a political decision. We had to obey. His only concession, just before we broke up at 2300 hours, was that our attack could be postponed from tomorrow, October 13, to first light on October 14. But Ismail then ordered that, in mounting the attack, our bridgeheads were not to be weakened. Instead, our operational reserves were to be committed.

Our operational reserves consisted of 330 tanks which comprised the bulk of two units: the 4th and 21st Armored Divisions. The 4th Armored Division had been deployed behind Third Army; the 21st behind Second Army. Each division comprised two armored brigades —100 tanks to a brigade—and one mechanized infantry brigade. The 21st Division had already been stripped of half of its tanks: one brigade had been sent to the front line to give armored support to the infantry assault of 16th Division. Now, through the night of October 12—completing the process the next night, October 13—we were ordered to send the rest of 21st Division to the front and all but a brigade of 4th Division too. Our total reserves in the operational area behind our two armies were thus being stripped to that single brigade of 100 tanks from 4th Division. It was a grave error.

Saturday, October 13

So was the plan, devised by Ismail, we were ordered to adopt. Four armored brigades and one mechanized infantry brigade were to make four independent thrusts.

Southern sector: One armored brigade in the direction of the Mitla Pass. One mechanized infantry brigade in the direction of Gedy Pass.

Central sector: Two armored brigades in the direction of Tasa.

Northern sector: One armored brigade in the direction of Baluza.

Barring a miracle, the attack had no chance of success whatever. The enemy had 900 tanks in their operational zone. We were attacking with 400. We were doing so, against well-prepared positions, in precisely the "penny packets" which had cost the enemy so dearly over October 8–9. And we were condemning our tank crews to attack over open terrain dominated by enemy air power.

Sunday, October 14

The outcome was predictable. Our attack started at first light. Concentrated enemy fire from well-concealed tanks supported by a high density of anti-tank guided weapons and close air support halted all four thrusts within ten miles. By midday, our forces were ordered to return to the bridgeheads. We had lost 250 tanks more than we had lost in the whole war so far. The enemy had lost 50.

1100 hours: When it was clear our attack was bogged beyond redemption, I phoned Second Army HQ and asked for General Mamoun. His Chief of Staff said he

was having a rest. Now commanders snatch sleep when they can, but not usually when their troops are engaged in battle; and they tend to come when GHQ phones. But however surprised, I did not insist on rousing him.

1300 hours: The President arrived at Center Ten. Having been told the fate of the attack, he ordered me to the front to raise the morale of the men. Within the hour I was on my way to the canal for the third time.

1600 hours: I reached Second Army advanced HQ and asked for Mamoun. I was told the truth. He was in bed with a breakdown. As news had come all morning of the repelling of the attack and the mounting losses among his men, he had found each report harder to bear. Suddenly he had fainted. He had been in bed ever since, conscious but quite unable to discharge his responsibilities.

I went to see him. Mamoun wanted to sit up but the doctor beside his bed prevented him. In a few private words, the doctor said Mamoun should be evacuated; he needed specialist treatment. But when I suggested to Mamoun that he go to Maadi Hospital for rest, he begged to stay with his men: he would be fine in the morning and could go back to work at once. That I refused to allow; but at his entreaty I did postpone evacuation until we had seen his condition the next day. (His condition did not improve; he was in the hospital until after the ceasefire.)

Then I set about picking up the pieces. I called a hasty meeting of Mamoun's general staff, discussed the operational position and conveyed the President's greetings and encouragement. I phoned the divisional commanders in the field and passed the same to them. And I told General Oraby, Commander of the 21st Armored Division,

that I wanted to drive over into Sinai to see him at once. (Oraby advised against it, saying it would be dark soon, my driver could lose his way, and a battlefield by night was no place for a Chief of Staff. But I insisted. The reconstruction of resources and morale was an urgent task.)

1700 hours: I left Second Army HQ heading south to the nearest bridge. I arrived to find an enemy artillery barrage in progress and the bridge destroyed. I drove on to the second—to find it taken up to avoid destruction in the same barrage. There was no way I could cross in the central sector.

I decided to return to Second Army HQ. By now it was dark, and we made slow progress through endless identity and password checks. No sooner were we back at the destroyed bridge than the enemy barrage resumed. We sped through the shellbursts. My vehicle was unscratched, but the car behind me, carrying my squad of guards, was hit and one of the guards injured.

2000 hours: Finally back at Second Army HQ, I phoned Oraby again, to explain why I could not see him and to wish him luck. Then I set off for Cairo.

2300 hours: Back at Center Ten. A full report to Ismail.

Midnight: The President phoned to ask about my trip. I gave him a full report on our most calamitous day.

* * *

Even now, six years later, I have no idea why that attack was mounted. It was, of course, President Sadat's decision. He has since claimed he did it to relieve Israeli pressure on the Syrian front. That has to be nonsense.

Egypt could have forced Israel to switch resources from Golan to Sinai only by posing a significant threat to the security of Israel. At no point did our forces have that

capacity. Well over 100 miles of open desert stretched between our bridgehead and the frontiers of Israel. Israeli air superiority rendered them impassable. This fact was so fundamental that I had made it forcefully at my first meeting with the Arab Collective Defense Council in November 1971. It was so obvious that the Council had accepted my point. It is a severe limitation of Egyptian power; but it will remain the case so long as Sinai is occupied or demilitarized and the Israelis retain air superiority.

But could we not have forced Israel to transfer armor from Golan to Sinai? No. Israel had eight armored brigades in Sinai, more than enough to contain any Egyptian attack.

Nor does the timing of the attack fit Sadat's explanation. By October 12 the Syrian front was already stabilizing. From October 11 two Iraqi divisions—one armored, one mechanized—had begun to share in the battle. The arrival of a Jordanian armored brigade on October 13 (to be followed later by a second armored brigade) provided additional support.

Finally, if our object was to help the Syrians, why did we not withdraw the 21st and 4th Armored Divisions to their assigned west bank reserve positions as soon as our attack had been broken?

There has to be another explanation for President Sadat's decision. Only he knows what it is.

Monday, October 15

Worse was to come. This morning a dot appeared on our air defense screens in Center Ten, moving swiftly north over the canal zone and out over the Nile delta.

We knew what it was. We had seen it before. At approximately 1330 hours on October 13, as we prepared the last details of our doomed attack, a dot had appeared following the same route. I had watched its track for a few minutes, then called General Fahmy to ask why his SAM crews were letting this thing promenade over us. He replied giving me the speed and altitude of the dot: Mach Three plus and 20 miles plus. Then of course we realized what it was: an SR-71A, the American reconnaissance counterpart of the MIG-25.

On that first flight, its cameras would have noted enough to tell skilled analysts of our tank divisions' move across the canal. This second pass would reveal that the west bank was now virtually denuded of armor. We could assume the Israelis would learn this within a few hours. It added urgency to my request to Ismail this morning that we immediately withdraw the 4th and 21st Armored Divisions to the west bank once more—including the 21st's brigade which had been attached to 16th Division. We could strengthen our bridgeheads with anti-tank mines; but the priority, as I saw it, was to return those two divisions to the second line to restore defenses which were now wholly unbalanced.

Ismail replied that withdrawal might panic our troops. I disagreed. The operation need not be panicky. It could be carefully undertaken under cover of Second and Third Armies. Ismail retorted that the enemy might interpret it as a sign of weakness. It seemed foolish to me to bluff. War is rarely determined by gestures, and in this case Israel would soon have the facts at its disposal. But I saw it was useless to argue. Ismail's unspoken reason was that he was to accompany the President to the People's Assembly next morning and wanted no suspicion of

weakness to tarnish his triumph. So began Blunder Number Two.

Tuesday, October 16

Mid-morning: First news of the enemy penetration. Second Army HQ phoned to report that small parties of enemy tanks had succeeded in crossing to the west bank in the vicinity of Deversoir. Second Army was taking steps to destroy them.

Our planning, as I have said, had assumed the enemy would try to take our bridgeheads from the rear. We had figured out the enemy's three likeliest crossing points —that is to say, the points where a determined enemy thrust was likeliest to pierce our bridgehead. One point was Deversoir. (That was where 16th Division in the north met 7th Division in the south, a classic target for an enemy thrust.) We had even assigned units to deal with our predictions. To deal with a breach at Deversoir we had briefed and exercised the 4th Armored Division and 25th Independent Armored Brigade, both of which were now of course, on the other side of the Canal. Even so, those first reports gave no reason to panic. Second Army said it was coping. We still had the 250 tanks of our strategic reserve. Of those, the 130 or so not part of the Presidential Guard could be deployed. I alerted the reserve units we had in the Cairo area to be ready to move if Second Army lost control of the situation.

Midday: News was still confused. Some of our rear SAM units, stationed almost ten miles behind the canal, began to report attacks by enemy tanks. Nobody seemed to know where the tanks had come from. They would

appear in the vicinity of a SAM battery, shell it from around 2,000 yards (these rear batteries had no long-range anti-tank weapons) and then disappear unhindered, to appear again who knew where. The reports spoke of 7–10 tanks in each party.

Afternoon: After Ismail's return from the People's Assembly, we held a conference to decide how to deal with the enemy penetration. We decided to take concerted action against the penetration by next morning, October 17. But what?

Second Army's reserve, the 21st Armored Division, was now in contact with the enemy and could not be immediately withdrawn. I proposed instead we withdraw units from Third Army, which was under no pressure: specifically our other reserve formation, 4th Division, plus the 25th Independent Armored Brigade which, armed with those T-62s, had been reinforcing the 7th Division bridgehead. That would give us ample troops on the west bank to cope with the penetration. It had the added advantage that 4th Division and the 25th Independent Armored Brigade had been trained to counter just this penetration. Our counter-attack could be launched from the southwest, driving directly northeast for the enemy crossing point. Simultaneously, 21st Division would thrust south down the Sinai bank to close the enemy's corridor to the crossing.

Ismail rejected the plan. He was still against the transfer of any forces from Sinai. We agreed that 21st Division should thrust south. But he wanted 25th Brigade to attack north from its existing positions in the Third Army bridgehead. Meanwhile, one of our infantry units held in reserve on the west bank, the 116th Infantry Brigade, should attack due east towards the crossing. It was a

reckless plan. Even when I explained the details to him, Ismail seemed incapable of grasping the danger of asking an armored brigade, the 25th, to advance about 25 miles with its left flank trapped against water and its right flank open to enemy attack. I phoned Third Army HQ. Wasel said he and the Commander of the 25th Brigade both agreed with me. It was too dangerous to attack along the eastern shore. They proposed their attack be launched from the west bank. We were vetoed by the Minister.

Evening: A few hours later, the President arrived at Center Ten and joined us in the Oeprations Room. Ismail explained tomorrow's plan. I regarded it as so ill-conceived and dangerous that I pressed my counter-proposal to the President in the hope he would overrule Ismail. Suddenly Sadat lost his temper. "Why do you always propose withdrawing out troops from the east bank," he shouted. "You ought to be court-martialled. If you persist in these proposals I will court-martial you. I do not want to hear another word."

I was deeply hurt. I tried to explain why such maneuvers were forced on us by our weakness on the west bank, but Sadat was in such a temper he would not even listen. I debated whether to resign on the spot. But I could not in all conscience abandon our armed forces now the tide had begun to turn. So I swallowed my pride and telling myself it was for my country's sake, I held my tongue.

Midnight: The orders had been issued for the Ismail counter-attack. Secretly, I had taken one step that might help our position on the west bank after its inevitable failure.

The crucial reserves of any army are its armor. But as our own crossing had proved, infantry with enough anti-

tank guided weapons are a formidable anti-tank force. We had good numbers of infantry still in reserve on the west bank, the principal units being three parachute brigades and the 3rd Mechanized Infantry Division. The problem was that we had stripped each of its anti-tank guided weapons battalion. The battalions had gone over in the crossing. Our plan had been to return them to their proper units as soon as possible; but Ismail's refusal, echoing the President, to move a man or a weapon out of Sinai had prevented even this "withdrawal." So while the battalions sat idle in Sinai—the enemy presenting no targets—their own units now faced the prospect of confronting enemy armor in a drastically weakened state.

I had a quiet word with the director of artillery, General Said el Mahy. On my own responsibility, and without telling Ismail, I ordered the steady withdrawal of those anti-tank guided weapons battalions from Sinai to their parent units on the west bank. Then I went to snatch a few hours sleep.

Wednesday, October 17

0300 hours: The chief operations duty officer woke me. General Wasel was on the line, wanting me urgently. I took the phone. Wasel said that because of technical problems the 25th Armored Brigade could not launch its attack at first light after all.

Privately, I appreciated Wasel's motives. But I told him it was an attack concerted with other formations; it was impossible to stop or postpone; 25th Brigade would have to play its part. Wasel pleaded with me to cancel

or at least postpone the assault. I was adamant. Finally, he muttered the desperate words: *"La hawla wala qowata illa billah."* ("Man has strength for nothing without the strength of God," the old Moslem prayer of those who find themselves powerless under superior force, in effect a prayer of resignation.) Then he said: "Very well, I will carry out the orders. But I know, and I am telling you, that this brigade is going to be destroyed. I put down the phone sick at heart. Wasel's views were mine. But in any command at any level the distinction between discussion and decision must be absolute. The decision had been made. I did not believe it was right. But it was now my job, and Wasel's, to carry it out.

First light: The enemy bridgehead now stretched about three miles north from Deversoir. Their dispositions to protect and enlarge it were those one would expect:

—One armored division secured the bridgehead. Its forces straddled the canal. Front-line: one armored brigade and one infantry brigade on the west bank defending the crossing. Second line: one armored brigade on the east bank.

—One armored brigade and one infantry brigade on the east bank were holding and countering the assaults of our nearest armored force, 21st Division.

—One division with three armored brigades was waiting just over ten miles to the east for the bridge the enemy were building. Immediately when it was laid the division would cross.

—Meanwhile, one armored brigade was pinning Second Army bridgehead.

—One armored brigade was pinning Third Army bridgehead.

In all, the enemy had massed around their crossing

six armored brigades and two infantry brigades while holding the rest of their front with only two armored brigades. In other words, 80 percent of the enemy's available forces were concentrated along the axis of their main thrust.

I am ashamed to reveal our deployment on October 17. In all, we had 20 infantry brigades and light armored brigades grouped into five infantry divisions and two armored divisions. Each infantry division has the following units as organic: four tank battalions; one BMP battalion; one anti-tank guided weapon battalion; one anti-tank battalion; nine artillery battalions (124 tanks; 36 MALOTKAs; 40 PMPs; 36 anti-tank guns, 85mm; 90 recoiless guns, 82 and 107mm; 535 RPGs; and 108 field artillery pieces that could also be used as anti-tank weapons). When well-trenched with these weapons, an infantry division could repel an armored attack of up to three armored brigades. Nevertheless, we reinforced each infantry division with 36 extra anti-tank guided weapons; 21 pieces of self-propelled SU-100 anti-tank guns; and an entire armored brigade. The armored brigade and anti-tank guided weapon supplementing each division had been added solely to raise the infantry's anti-tank capabilities during the crossing. Our plan had always been to return those reinforcements to their mother units. I was now pulling back the anti-tank guided weapons. But the political decision to withdraw not a man or weapon from Sinai kept those tanks over there. On the morning of October 17, then, the eight armored brigades which, somewhat depleted by battle, we had at the front were deployed as follows:

—Four armored brigades virtually idle, dispersed

among our bridgeheads of 18th Division, 2nd Division, 7th Division and 19th Division.

—One armored brigade attacking northward from Third Army bridgehead.

—The two tank brigades of 21st Division, battered and bone-weary from three days of virtually ceaseless combat, attacking southward.

—More than ten miles west of the canal, one single armored brigade ranged along more than 40 miles of front to prevent further infiltration.

Less than 40 percent of our resources were massed in the combat zone. For the Battle of Deversoir we were pitting three armored brigades and one infantry brigade against an enemy force of six armored brigades and two infantry brigades—an enemy superiority of two-to-one. And our plan of attack was calculated to further worsen our chances.

That was Blunder Number Three. Through October 17 the Battle of Deversoir ran to its appointed conclusion.

Phase One: The three prongs of our attack were supposed to hit simultaneously. But as usually happens in such cases—technical approaches on external lines—synchronization was lost. Each attacking force was left to fight its own battle. Our 116th Infantry Brigade advanced east into the enemy bridgehead. It succeeded in destroying several enemy tanks. But when our troops were barely a mile from the waterway the brigade came under heavy fire. With casualties mounting, it was forced to pull back.

Phase Two: Pushing south on the opposite bank, 21st Division succeeded in cutting the enemy's main route to Deversoir from the east. But it could get no further.

Phase Three: Advancing north, 25th Brigade was wiped out. The enemy division of three armored brigades waiting ten miles to the east for their bridge to open moved against our lone brigade and caught it in a classic ambush. One brigade moved to block our line of advance. A second took up position on our right. The third swung in a flanking maneuver to take our brigade in the rear. When our tanks rolled north in the killing ground, they were attacked from three sides and trapped against the lakes on the fourth. Our crews fought desperately against the odds. But when night came there were only a few survivors to pull back to Third Army bridgehead. It was an utter waste.

Thursday, October 18

Morning: Through the night the enemy's first bridge had been laid. By dawn the enemy had on the west bank three armored brigades and an infantry brigade. Against this considerable presence we now sent the 23rd Armored Brigade, one of the two brigades of our ultimate, strategic reserve. It was repelled with heavy losses.

Midday: By now another armored brigade had crossed, swelling the enemy force to four armored brigades and one infantry brigade. With the virtual destruction of 23rd Brigade, we had on the west bank just two armored brigades that held back when 4th Division had been sent into Sinai for our doomed attack, and the Presidential Guard still in its peacetime barracks in Cairo. That was all.

The enemy had won the Battle of Deversoir. Their next step must be to pour across more armor, split it

and thrust north and south simultaneously behind both our armies.

Drastic action would be needed to stop this. But would the President and his Minister of War have the courage to take it? Already the regime was falling victim to its own lies. With cynical irresponsibility Ismail was announcing and our media were reporting that the enemy penetration still amounted to seven tanks hiding in the thickets around Deversoir. Our own armed forces were by now the principal victims of this nonsense. Convoys found themselves ambushed. Rear headquarters, guard units, and most damagingly, SAM batteries found themselves under sudden fire without the faintest idea what was going on. A general alert to all units had been forbidden as "likely to induce panic." All these men knew were the lies they read. Not that they could have taken many precautions. Their personal anti-tank weapons were all lying in Sinai, victims of the "no withdrawal" decree.

At least yesterday and today had brought back to the west bank some of the sub-units of the anti-tank guided weapon battalions we had split up and sent over the canal as reinforcements in the initial assault. (We had sent over two such anti-tank guided weapon battalions, split into six companies. These I now withdrew. Each division of course, also had its own anti-tank guided weapon battalion integrated into its structure. There was no question of withdrawing those, merely the reinforcements.) But so few even of our senior field commanders knew the position that the move brought vehement protest. Even among our divisional commanders, in other words, only the commanders of 16th Division and 2nd Division appreciated the magnitude of the threat.

One divisional commander in Sinai within the Third Army bridgehead phoned me to say that removal of the reinforcement anti-tank guided weapon company he had would "endanger the stability of my defensive position." I gave him the alibi he wanted. "Yes, yes, I appreciate that," I said. "I bear sole responsibility. Just send them quickly."

Yet on the west bank hundreds of people were being killed and thousands taken prisoner. Swift armored thrusts with close air-support against unprepared men was the sort of war at which the Israelis excelled. Faced with a real fight east of the canal they had been unable to take a single prisoner. Now they were picking up hundreds to provide the propaganda at which they also excelled. And all the time the steady destruction of SAM sites was tearing a hole in our air defenses through which the Israeli air force could pass at will.

1400 hours: The President arrived in the Operations Room. Ismail described the situation. At last the pair were driven to adopt my own plan to withdraw armor from the east bank. They proceeded to sabotage even this. They decided we would withdraw only a single armored brigade from Third Army bridgehead, the brigade from 4th Division which had gone across for the attack. What good could that do now?

I was not asked to speak and I volunteered no opinion. It would have been a waste of breath. The President and his Minister of War, neither particularly competent military men, seemed unable to grasp that the job of a commander is to think ahead. A GHQ must be dealing with events foreseen two and preferably three or more days away. The imagination and foresight with which he

manages that is one of the inescapable tests of a commander: because if there is one rule about a battle it is: "What is possible today may not be possible tomorrow." Sadat and Ismail responded only to the present or the past: their decision lagged hopelessly behind events. This latest edict was a prime instance. They could not see that what might have sufficed two or three days ago was wholly inadequate now. Even as they deliberated, a fifth enemy armored brigade was starting across. Withdrawing one armored brigade over the coming night of 18/19 was not going to contain, let alone roll back, an enemy bridgehead now two divisions in strength.

Finally, the President turned to me. I was to move to Second Army to raise its morale and to do my best to stop its position from deteriorating further. The army must not be encircled. At 1445 hours I set off from Center Ten. Before I left the Operations Room, it was made clear that the tanks of 4th Division, which now had to cover the rear of both Second and Third Armies, would take orders directly from Center Ten. Second Army would not have a single tank under its own command west of the canal.

1730 hours: I arrived at Second Army HQ. This was the situation we faced:

—The crossing of yet another armored brigade in the course of the afternoon had given the enemy five tank brigades and one infantry brigade on the west bank.

—They had, exactly as predicted, split into two divisions. General Sharon, with two armored brigades and one infantry brigade, prepared to move north. General Bren Adan, with three armored brigades, prepared to head west and south.

—On the Sinai side, the enemy's crossing was finally secure. Fire from the west bank onto 21st Division's flank had forced them to pull back. In effect, the right or southern flank of the Second Army had been driven north to a line opposite Serabeum on the west bank—and the enemy's corridor correspondingly widened.

—If Sharon's division did thrust north, all we had on the west bank guarding the rear of Second Army was the 150th Parachute Brigade, positioned to stem an attack towards Ismailia.

When I discussed all this with General Abdel Moneim Khalil, who had replaced Saad Mamoun as Commander of Second Army, his plan was:

—Whatever anyone said, withdraw the 15th Independent Armored Brigade with its T-62 to the west bank to guard the army's rear north of the fresh-water canal which cut across from Ismailia west to Cairo.

—Destroy all the bridges over that canal.

—Defend the west bank south of canal with the 150th Parachute Brigade.

—Meanwhile harass the Deversoir crossing points with artillery fire and commando raids.

I approved the plan. Given the limitations imposed upon us, there was little more we could do. For the next 24 hours, Khalil and I stayed together, save only when one of us would nap for an hour or two.

Our first concern was to strengthen and encourage the 182nd Parachute Brigade, which was now bearing the first brunt of Sharon's drive north. Every yard the enemy gained would widen the threat to the rears of 16th Division and 21st Division, forcing them to pull back north. Our other concern was to throw everything we

had at the enemy crossing points. Through the night of October 18–19 the enemy tried to build their second bridge. But our artillery fire—well directed by our forward observation posts—disrupted the work. From intercepted radio traffic we knew we were causing heavy losses. But it was not enough.

Friday, October 19

Morning: The enemy tanks kept up the battering of our paratroopers. In the early hours, our troops forward positions were pushed back and we lost sight of the bridge area. Our artillery continued to pound away, according to data we received about the enemy bridge sites. The enemy got their second bridge across. Our paratroopers inflicted a heavy toll but in the end some of their positions were stormed. The rest could be only a question of time.

Late afternoon: I drove back to Center Ten and gave the Minister a full report on the position of Second Army. I was told of the situation facing Third Army. It was not good—and for the same reason as ever. We still had more troops on the east bank than we needed, but too few on the west bank to counter what was now a very real threat to encircle both our armies. What we needed was tanks. I proposed we withdraw the four armored brigades that were still on the east bank (two with 16th Division, one with 2nd Division, and one with 19th Division). Ismail refused. No unit would be withdrawn from Sinai.

I went to confer with my assistants. I did not hide from them my conviction that unless we withdrew armor from the east to save the west, the outcome now looked grave. But what could we do? One of them suggested I call the

President and put the situation to him. I agreed.

I went back to Ismail and told him that myself and my senior staff wanted the President to come to Center Ten to learn the situation for himself. Ismail was reluctant. It was a bit late, he said. (It was about 2200 hours.) I insisted he call the President and left the room only after receiving an affirmative answer. Minutes later Ismail came out to tell me the President was on his way. We need not make this a public meeting, he said; we should limit it to a minimum. I agreed and called only five commanders to attend: Mubarak (Air Force); Fahmy (Air Defense); Mahy (Artillery); Gamassy (Chief of Operations); Nassar (Defense Intelligence Department); plus the Minister and myself.

2230 hours: The President arrived, accompanied by the Minister for Presidential Affairs, Abdel Fatah Abdullah. They went directly to Ismail's office where they remained closeted for more than half-an-hour while the rest of us cooled our heels in the conference room off the Operations Room.

2310 hours: The trio emerged. The meeting began. In turn, Sadat asked each commander except myself to make his report. I was not asked to speak. The reports were truthful, detailed, frank. As the last one finished, the President said simply: "We will not withdraw a single soldier from the east to the west." Still I made no comment. "Say something," Abdullah whispered. I ignored him. What was there to say? Ismail would have told him my considered judgment that the withdrawal of four armored brigades was our only hope; yet here was this man saying not a soldier must move. I had wanted the President to know the facts. Now he did. He could not now claim that he had been kept in ignorance. The fate

of the country was in his hands. (In his memoirs, Sadat says I wanted to withdraw *all* our forces to the west bank, but that the other commanders at the meeting said "there was nothing to worry about." Nonsense.)

After the withdrawal of the four armored brigades I was suggesting, we would have still had in our bridgeheads 18 infantry brigades reinforced with 22 tank battalions, 5 BMP battalions, 5 anti-tank guided weapon battalions, 5 ATK gun battalions, 60 field artillery battalions, and 15 heavy mortar battalions. This force in figures, after excluding casualties, was as follows:

—90,000 officers and men
—3,500 ATK pieces (consisting of 500 tanks, 350 anti-tank guided weapons, 150 85mm guns, 400 82mm and 107mm recoiless, 2,100 RPG)
—700 field artillery pieces that also could be used as ATK guns in cases of armored attack
—250 heavy mortars (120 mm and 160 mm)

The enemy on the other hand had only about 300 tanks, and in the worst case could raise their number to 500, but only at the expense of the Syrian front or at the expense of the penetrating troops west of the canal. To suggest the withdrawal of all our troops from the east under such a situation is madness. To refuse to withdraw the suggested four armored brigades is a combination of madness, ignorance and treason. This was our fourth and fatal blunder.

Saturday, October 20—Monday, October 22

Our situation on the west bank steadily deteriorated, but less than we had feared or the enemy hoped. The battle was fluid, without a continuous front. The triangle

between the Bitter Lakes and the Cairo-Suez road was ideal tank country, and the enemy reverted to their traditional tactics of using small groups of armor with close air-support. Even so, the enemy's gains were surprisingly limited. The resistance of our infantry and paratroopers was tenacious beyond praise. And by now the enemy had learned healthy respect for our anti-tank guided weapons. So despite their air cover and unchallengeable superiority in armor—six brigades against our two—their progress was slow and cautious.

By 1852 hours on Monday, October 22, the time of the first ceasefire, they had in fact gained little significant ground. The northern thrust of Sharon's brigades had been more or less halted. To the south, Adan's divisions had made more ground, reaching the area of Geneifa from where their artillery could shell the Cairo-Suez road. But their casualties were heavy and would have grown heavier. A few minutes before the ceasefire, we launched three R-17E missiles (SCUDs) into their Deversoir concentrations. (The barrage which the President promptly claimed had been by our own fictitious missile, *Al Kahir.*)

Tuesday, October 23

Determined to improve their bargaining position, the Israelis promptly breached the ceasefire to complete their encirclement of our Third Army. They launched a concerted assault by four armored brigades. We had only two armored brigades west of the canal: one blocking any thrust westward by Sharon; the other blocking a similar thrust in the southern sector. The enemy, having concentrated four brigades in that southern sector used

one to pin down ours, so allowing the other three enemy brigades to drive south without question.

To excuse this, the enemy adopted their usual expedient of claiming we had started it—as if a concerted attack by four armored brigades is whistled up in minutes. And ever since, their propagandists have depicted the drive south as a dashing and gallant action. Driving unopposed past administrative bases and rest camps full of wounded men, through checkpoints manned by weary soldiers relaxing in the knowledge of a ceasefire, does not strike me as particularly gallant, but perhaps I am old fashioned.

Still unopposed, the Israelis encircled the town of Suez and continued south to reach Adabia on the coast some ten miles below Suez. They were driving in a convoy, line astern with their lights on, while our scattered outposts gawked at them. Sporadically on the road south from Suez, a few shots were fired at them, usually on the initiative of some junior officer with the wit to be suspicious of this strange procession. But the naval garrison at Adabia was surprised and, after a savage little struggle, overwhelmed.

Wednesday, October 24

The only gallantry discernible in the episode came next morning. Reasoning that the enemy had broken the ceasefire, the commander of our Adabia sector launched a counterattack with the forces at his disposal. They consisted of one infantry company and seven ancient T-34 tanks. In corners of the Adabia naval base, isolated pockets of our men were fighting on. This little force set out to relieve them. The enemy's dash and swagger did

not extend as far as combat. To deal with seven obsolete tanks they summoned their air force, which arrived with napalm and missiles. The seven tanks were destroyed, the infantry company wiped out. A few days later I went to see the blackened hulls. I was very proud—and very sick of the weakness and vanity and lying which had brought such a sacrifice.

By October 24 our military position was as bad as it could be. The Third Army—two reinforced divisions, about 45,000 men and 250 tanks—was completely cut off. They had four days' food and water. They were dominated by enemy armor on top of our own west bank ramparts. Out of range of our surviving SAM units, they were open prey to enemy air attacks. They could not fight their way west: air strikes had already destroyed most of Third Army's limited stock of crossing equipment. They could not be relieved: enemy air and armor superiority was such that we could not break through. And after the enemy air force started systematic work, the Third Army soon had 600 casualties needing evacuation. Hopeless.

Chapter Seven: Helping Hands

The President had thrown away the greatest army Egypt had ever assembled. He had thrown away the biggest airlift the Soviet Union had ever mounted. He had thrown away the greatest collaborative effort the Arabs had achieved in a generation. So many lies have since been told about each of those aspects of the war that, before recounting the denouement of our disaster, it is right I set the record straight. On the eve of the October War, Egypt had the following:

Combat Forces

—19 infantry brigades
—8 mechanized brigades
—10 armored brigades
—3 airborne brigades
—1 amphibious brigade
—1 R-17E SSM brigade

They deployed about 1,700 tanks; 2,500 armored vehicles; 2,000 artillery pieces; 1,500 anti-tank guns; 700 anti-tank guided weapons; several thousand RPG-7

portable anti-tank projectiles; and many more thousands of RPG-43 anti-tank grenades.

Air Force

—400 combat aircraft
—70 transport aircraft
—140 helicopters

Air Defense

—150 SAM battalions
—2,500 anti-aircraft guns

Navy

—12 submarines
—5 destroyers
—3 frigates
—12 submarine chasers
—17 OSA and KOMAR class missile patrole boats
—30 SHERSHEN and P-6 motor-torpedo boats
—14 minesweepers
—14 landing craft

To indicate the size of these, I point out that they were stronger than many of the national forces within NATO or the Warsaw Pact in ground forces—much stronger, for instance, than either the British or French forces. And virtually everything had been supplied, on credit terms nobody else would have matched, by the Soviet Union. For me therefore, as I have said in discussing my differences with Sadek, all debate about the wisdom of Egypt's relationship with the Soviet Union boiled down to a single question: "Is there any other country in the world which in the past, present or near future could or would supply Egypt with sufficient arms to give her the local superiority over Israel to liberate her territories?" The answer is no.

It is, of course, true that the United States was at the same time supplying Israel with weapons so profuse and sophisticated as to give them strategic superiority over all their Arab neighbors combined. The apex of this was Israel's Air Force, which could neutralize not only our air forces but our ground forces and navies as well. In that sense the United States was a "better" ally to Israel than the Soviet Union was to us. The point is irrelevant. The United States would never have supplied us.

And if our weapons lagged behind Israel's, the reason, albeit known to very few people, was that the Soviet Union is ten years behind the United States in air technology. For all the talk of NATO being a defensive organization, the fact is that its armorer, the United States, had developed the best penetrative fighter-bomber in the world: The Phantom with its array of electronics and missiles. The Soviet Union, by contrast, had concentrated on defensive fighters and anti-aircraft missiles. We had nothing to match the Phantom because the Soviet Union had nothing. (I have already acknowleged the truth of the Soviet claim that we could not have absorbed more aircraft than they supplied. The technological gap remains.)

Sadat's particular charges against the Soviet Union are trivial and, anyway, untrue:

That the Soviet Union supplied us with a few World War Two bridges, but we had to build two-thirds of our own. Not true. Ten of our twelve heavy bridges were supplied by the Soviets. True, only three were of their most modern PMP type; but the Soviet army itself did not then have many—and a fourth PMP was airlifted in during the war. Ninety percent of our tanks and vehicles crossed into Sinai over Soviet bridges or ferries.

That the Soviet Union never supplied us with their satellite or MIG-25 reconnaissance photographs. Not true. We used to complain we did not see enough photographs; but from time to time we would be shown new film to study, though never to take away or copy. To my personal knowledge, Sadat himself saw those pictures at least twice before the war and once during it. After the ceasefire of October 24, Soviet satellite photographs were our main source of information about enemy activity.

The truth is that we, not the Soviet Union, were the bad allies. During the war we persistently hid the facts from them. Their Chief Liaison Officer, General Samakhodsky, was never let into the Operations Room. He had to be content with briefings from one of our Defense Intelligence officers. To my certain knowledge, the facts about the enemy penetration at Deversoir and its subsequent development were concealed from them. (Though their satellites must have told them the truth.)

When, much later, I read in the memoirs of my Israeli counterpart, General David Elazar, that one of their first decisions after the outbreak of war had been to maintain direct and continuous contact between the Israeli high command and the Pentagon, telling the Americans all their plans and listening to American advice, I contrasted it with our own self-defeating opportunism.

Yet, despite all this, the Soviet Union mounted the biggest airlift in its history to help us. (Certainly, the Soviet's own prestige and military capabilities were at stake in our battle. But mutual interest is the cement of alliances, and we are considering their performance as allies.) The airlift had not been planned in advance. Yet it began three days after the outbreak of war and by its

finish the Soviets had lifted about 15,000 tons of war material to Egypt and Syria. More than 900 round trips by their AN-12 and AN-22 transport aircraft.

Of course there were muddles. After the first week of war, we found that our consumption of short-range weapons such as the RPG-7 was much less than we had expected, while our demand for anti-tank guided weapons like the MALOTKA (SAGGER) was much greater. Alerting the planners in charge of the airlift in Moscow to amend their plans and reorganize the aircraft loads took time. So we sometimes got piles of weapons we did not need, while searching in vain for items we were desperate for. But it was an extraordinary operation. Tanks, anti-tank weapons, anti-aircraft missiles, ammunition and a host of other supplies reached us—more than half the material, and almost all the tanks, going to Syria. It reflects considerable credit to the Soviet Air Force—and to those in Egypt and Syria who so rapidly unloaded, sorted, checked, grouped and sent into battle this mass of material.

On top of that, the Soviet Union mounted a sea-borne resupply operation: no less than 63,000 tons, mainly to Syria, by October 30. (An operation which could never have been carried out without the presence and swift reinforcement of a Soviet fleet in the Mediterranean.)

It remains the case that even this prodigious Soviet effort was modest by comparison with the American airlift to Israel over the same period. The U.S. Air Force C-141 and C-5 cargo aircraft flew 566 round trips with 40 tons and 100 tons respectively—in all, 22,395 tons of supplies. Phantoms, M-60 tanks, CH-53 helicopters, their most modern missiles such as MAVERICK, and

electronic jamming equipment so advanced not even America's NATO allies had been allowed it. Plus another 5,500 tons flown in by Israel's own El Al aircraft. On the basis that an airlift may be judged by the multiple of weight lifted and distance carried, and given that the round trip from the United States to Israel is 7,000 miles, while that from the Soviet Union to Egypt or Syria is about 2,000 miles, in ton-miles the American airlift was five times the Soviet effort (6.5 times if Israel's own contribution is included). On top of that the USA mounted a seaborne resupply operation of 33,210 tons to Israel by October 30.

At the end of it all, I have to say, the Russians remained resolutely Russian—which is to say some of them were as harsh and obstinate as ever. A month after the war General Lashnekov, who had been Chief Soviet Liaison Officer in Cairo in 1968–69, came to Egypt to be briefed on the military situation. Ismail, myself, Mamoun and a few others met Lashnekov in the Operations Room. Describing our experiences in anti-tank warfare, I praised the MALOTKA and the RPG-7. But I said we had found their supposedly portable B-10 and B-11 recoilless anti-tank guns too heavy in practice.

"If Soviet scientists could lengthen the range of the RPG-7 to cover the dead ground of the MALOTKA, the two would work in great harmony," I said.

Lashnekov was brusque: "Russian scientists calculate everything and do not need such ideas," he said. "Soviet weapons are excellent. We made them and we know it."

"You may have made them," I said. "We have fought with them. If you know everything why are you here questioning us?"

The Minister stepped in to cool the situation. But a

few minutes later Lashnekov was making equally blunt —and ill-formed—criticisms of the deployment of our air force.

* * *

Our Arab brothers had also proved staunch to our support, belying the persistent denigration of their leaders by President Sadat. Again to put the record straight, these were the reinforcements they sent to the fronts:

Egyptian front

—1 MIG-21 squadron (Algeria)
—1 SU-7 squadron (Algeria)
—1 MIG-17 squadron (Algeria)
—2 Mirage III squadrons (Libya), one with Egyptian pilots, the other with Libyans
—1 Hawker Hunter squadron (Iraq)
—1 armored brigade (Algeria)
—1 armored brigade (Libya)
—1 infantry brigade (Morocco)
—1 infantry brigade (Sudan)
—1 infantry battalion (Kuwait)
—1 infantry battalion (Tunisia)

Syrian front

—3 MIG-21 squadrons (Iraq)
—1 MIG-17 squadron (Iraq)
—1 armored division (Iraq)
—1 infantry division (Iraq)
—1 tank regiment (Morocco)
—2 armored brigades (Jordan)

Jordanian defensive front

—1 infantry brigade (Saudi Arabia)

Comparison with the November 1971 resolution of the Arab Collective Defense Council and the meetings which followed shows that it was mainly in air power

that some Arab countries did not meet their pledges. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait both failed to send Lightning squadrons. Algeria did not send a MIG-17 squadron but did send an armored brigade without being asked. Morocco did not send an F-5 squadron because its pilots were in jail after the attempted coup. The remarkable fact remains that eight Arab states sent forces to the front. Another seven Arab states sent nothing—but in each case the reason was that they had nothing fit to send. The reinforcements which did arrive I would rank in order of effectiveness: Iraq, Algeria, Libya, Jordan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Kuwait, Tunisia.

IRAQ: I pay particular tribute to the Iraqi Hunter pilots for the daring and skill of their anti-tank strikes in Sinai. They swiftly gained such a reputation that our field commanders, calling for air support, would frequently ask for the Iraqi squadron. To the Syrian front, meanwhile, the Iraqis—despite their reservations before the war—did not hesitate to send reinforcements once battle started. Two Iraqi fighter squadrons were flying combat missions from October 8. Two other squadrons joined in later. And the forward elements of one armored and one infantry division arrived at the Syrian front on October 11.

ALGERIA: Its three squadrons arrived in Egypt through October 9–11. The armored brigade arrived on October 17. Apart from this military support, Algeria deposited 200 million dollars with the Soviet Union in the first days of November to finance Egyptian and Syrian arms purchases. (GHQ was told of this on November 12 and ordered to prepare a hundred-million-dollar list of needs.)

LYBIA: Its forces were in Egypt even before the war started.

MOROCCO: When King Hassan learned of the outbreak of hostilities, he sent the infantry brigade he had promised by every available transport aircraft, including those of his national airline. The King's military aide, Colonel Delemy, came to visit their men at the end of October and called on me. "The King sends his congratulations and best wishes," he said. "He tells me to say that if you had told him you needed the brigade so urgently he would have sent it with you."

"Convey my thanks to the King," I said. "I hope his majesty understands the position I was in."

As with our Soviet allies, of course, our collaboration with our Arab brothers was not always free of problems. Some reinforcements were rushed to the battle without prior planning. Some were too poorly equipped or trained to be useful. Others, for example the Sudanese infantry brigade, were of admirable standard but, because of transport problems, arrived too late to join in.

It remained a great achievement: the finest collaboration among the Arabs since 1948. That merely made it the harder to bear the tragedy we faced with the wholly avoidable encirclement of our Third Army on October 24.

Chapter Eight: Aftermath

The rest, as they say, is history. Sadat, who had rejected the advice of the Soviet Union on October 12 to seek a ceasefire, and who continued to reject that advice until, too late, he accepted it on October 19, now found himself begging for Soviet help. The U.S. Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, had turned a blind eye to Israeli violation of the ceasefire on October 23, no doubt pleased that the Arab world should at last have a demonstration of what American power could achieve in the Middle East. On the evening of October 24, six Soviet airborne divisions were put on alert and Soviet Premier Brezhnev sent President Nixon what amounted to an ultimatum. Under pressure from the United States, Israel accepted another ceasefire from October 24. They could afford to: they had their bargaining counter. They refused to comply with United Nations Resolution 339 calling upon them to return to their October 22 lines. Of course.

Thursday, October 25

Israel did not observe this ceasefire either. They were determined to capture the town of Suez, which they reckoned would compel the immediate surrender of the Third Army, before United Nations' observers arrived. They had two days. Shortly before the ceasefire took effect on September 24, the enemy had launched a determined assault against the town with three armored brigades and a battalion of paratroopers. But this was repelled with considerable loss.

Today the enemy turned to air power and artillery. Third Army now suffered the latest fruits of the American airlift. Enemy fighter-bombers launched MAVERICK TV-guided, air-to-surface missiles against the tanks dug-in in its encircled bridgehead. Our losses climbed. Meanwhile enemy artillery systematically set about reducing the town of Suez.

1100 hours: A meeting of the Armed Forces Supreme Council, the first since the outbreak of war. Ismail in the chair. (The Third Army Commander, General Wasel, was almost an absentee. His advanced HQ had been surrounded by the enemy in the course of the October 23 battle. But just as it was on the point of capture, Wasel and his men managed to slip through their enemy lines to his rear HQ.) The main topic was, of course, how to open the road to Third Army. But though everyone spoke with passion, nobody could come up with a realistic plan. We adjourned for "further studies" to be made by the commander of the unit which would inevitably have to carry out the mission, Brigadier Kabil of the 4th Armored Division.

Friday, October 26

Kabil came to Center Ten to present the results of his study. A small group gathered in the conference room: Ismail, myself, Kabil, Gamassy, Mahy, Nassar.

"My men and I are ready to die to open the road to the Third Army," Kabil said. "But I have to say I do not think we will succeed. And if our division is destroyed the road to Cairo will be wide open."

Ismail intervened: "So let us change the mission from opening the road to carrying food and supplies to the army," he said.

That seemed to me even more hazardous than the original mission and I at once opposed it. To stay alive the Third Army needed rather over 150 tons of supplies a day. The vast column of soft-skinned vehicles needed to carry such quantities would simply be an added burden on the tank crews of 4th Division as they fought their way down the road.

But Ismail insisted upon assigning the mission to Kabil in writing. Now, it is a rule in the Egyptian Armed Forces that any order momentous enough to be in writing has to be signed by the Commander in Chief and the Chief of Staff. I told Ismail: "You can sign that order if you wish. I am not going to sign it."

"Then what do you want?" Ismail said angrily. "I cannot understand you. Do you really want the men in the Third Army to surrender?"

"I hope I never find myself in this position," I said. "And we here are quite ready to die for the sake of the army if that would bring its salvation. But what is the point of destroying the only reserves we have to no

purpose? That I am against. It would open the road for the enemy to march practically unopposed to Cairo."

Ismail was shocked: "You shouldn't say such things in front of the 4th Division Commander," he said.

"Kabil himself has just said the same thing," I replied. "And the Third Army Commander himself made that precise point at our Armed Forces Supreme Council meeting. And it is in writing here." I waved Kabil's study.

"If you do not sign," Ismail said, "I will report the fact of your refusal to the President."

"Please do," I replied. "I will not sign that order."

To save face, Ismail tinkered with the wording, making insignificant changes to the mission, and issued it under his own signature. We all knew it was a bluff. Ismail would never take that sort of responsibility. The mission was quietly cancelled later.

2300 hours: The forward elements of the United Nations Emergency Force began to arrive in Cairo.

Saturday, October 27

0400 hours: Ismail was called to see the President.

0600 hours: Fifty men of the United Nations Emergency Force contingent began the drive from Cairo to Suez.

0600 hours: Ismail returned from his meeting to tell us:

—Sadat had received a message from President Nixon assuring him there would be "an honorable solution" to the problem of the Third Army.

—All military activities must cease by 1300 hours today.

—At that time an administrative [unarmed] column with supplies for Third Army could move down the Suez road.

—At 1500 hours, negotiations between an Israeli and an Egyptian delegation would start at the 101 Kilometer mark on the Cairo-Suez road. General Gamassy was given charge of the Egyptian delegation.

* * *

So the cards were on the table. It was now accepted that the fate of Third Army was in the hands of the Israelis and American diplomacy.

The Israelis refused to let the United Nations Emergency Force contingent enter Suez. Our column of 109 trucks and 20 ambulances was also stopped: the Emergency Force Commander, General Ensio Siilasvuo, informed us he had no instructions to let it pass. And at 1830 hours Gamassy returned to Center Ten: no Israeli had turned up to meet him.

The lines hummed between Cairo and Washington. Each call would elicit promises, details of new arrangements. When we tried to act on them, the Israelis outside Suez would deny what Washington claimed they had agreed.

Gamassy's Kilometer 101 meeting was rescheduled for midnight, for instance. For a second time no Israeli turned up. Other postponements followed. Not until 1200 hours on October 29 did Gamassy finally meet the enemy. Meanwhile, the Israelis continued to hold up our convoy to Third Army with one problem after another: "These supplies are too much . . . . We will only let in medical supplies . . . . We have received no word from our authorities that food and water can

pass . . . . No Egyptian driver or escort can cross Kilometer 101 . . . . They must leave their trucks here for Emergency Force drivers to take on . . . ."

Egypt had no choice but to accept every humiliating condition. By such tactics the Israelis kept Third Army on the brink of collapse, the better to use it as a hostage against the conditions they now wanted to impose. When they did finally deign to talk to Gamassy at Kilometer 101, for instance, the Israelis refused to allow supplies to Third Army to be discussed until we had satisfied their own immediate demand. They wanted the release of one of their spies, named Avidan, who was serving a long prison sentence in Egypt. The President approved his release. Next day, October 30, Gamassy handed the man over. (At a later stage in the talks the Israelis demanded the release of more spies, principally one named Baroukh Mezrahy, an Egyptian Jew who had emigrated to Israel and later returned under another name.)

Avidan's release was only the first of a series of demands. Israel next required the exchange of prisoners. The rule of war is that prisoners are exchanged only after a truce or other settlement has been agreed, and Gamassy was there only to negotiate a disengagement. So he tried to bargain: the prisoners would be released when Israel had withdrawn to its lines of October 22. On November 14 Golda Meir told the Knesset: "Not a single kilogram of supplies will pass to the Third Army unless we receive our men captured by the Egyptians." We gave in. The exchange began the next day.

By now the weather was cold. We asked to send blankets and pullovers to our men of the Third Army. The Israelis refused.

Private spite was not enough. The Israelis also sought public humiliation. They announced that their vessel *Beersheba* would challenge our declared blockade of the Red Sea and pass through the straits of Bab-el-Mandab on December 2/3. The truth was that the blockade had not been enforced since November 1, when a tanker carrying 123,000 tons to Israel had been permitted to pass unhindered by our naval patrols for fear the enemy would refuse supplies to the Third Army. But Israel wanted more than a secret surrender.

When Cairo complained to Washington about Israel's intransigence, pressure merely increased. On December 4 our Foreign Minister, Ismail Fahmy, got a letter from Kissinger which said:

—Negotiations between Egypt and Israel at Kilometer 101 should resume "on a business-like basis."

—The Yariv proposals of November 22 could be the basis of the proposed Geneva peace conference.

—If the Arabs did not lift their oil embargo before Geneva, the United States might find itself unable to exert any influence on the conference.

Kissinger did not define what he meant by "business-like basis". But if it meant "give and take" we were without doubt the ones destined to go on giving. And not just us, it now seemed. The oil embargo was beginning to bite. Now Kissinger was forcing Egypt to persuade its Arab allies to abandon it. The whole Arab world was now to pay the price for the encirclement of the Third Army.

* * *

By then the search for scapegoats was under way. Looking back, I realize Sadat must have seen his need

for an alibi by October 23, as soon as Israeli encirclement of Third Army had given the most public possible lie to those fairy tales of seven tanks in the bushes of Deversoir. But the first hints appeared only a month later.

November 21: A meeting of the Armed Forces Supreme Council. Sadat in the chair. It was clear that most of us round the table were furious and humiliated by the Israelis' incessant demands at Kilometer 101 and by the plight of Third Army which forced us to accede to them. The President mused on the enemy penetration:

"Just one night," he said. "Think of it. One night in which our troops did not do their best and the enemy was able to cross with armor to the west bank. One single night. That night of October 18/19. Had we acted correctly and vigorously that night we could have closed the breach and none of this could have happened."

I saw at once where he was driving. October 18/19 was the night I had spent at Second Army HQ. I was having none of it.

"Mr. President," I said, "the men of Second Army did all they could with what they had during that night of October 18."

"After the war," the President said, "we will convene an inquiry to determine the responsibility each individual bears for the penetration."

"Excellent," I said. "It is indeed important to learn who was responsible."

After the meeting, Ismail and I accompanied the President to his car. As we walked back the Minister said: "Why did you speak like that to the President? Why take his remarks personally? Were you the Commander of the Second Army?"

It had crossed my mind as Sadat spoke to wonder precisely what Ismail had told him about the events of that night. I was not inclined to be emollient. "I am not and was not the Commander of the Second Army," I said. "But my presence there as Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces gave me the right to approve or reject any decision taken by the army commander."

Back in the room where everyone was packing their papers, I went over to the Second Army Commander, General Khalil. "I scent some backstairs move to find a scapegoat," I said quietly. "Be careful to see that the documents in Second Army HQ relating to the conduct of the war are not stolen or falsified."

As the Armed Forces Supreme Council dispersed, however, I took to brooding over another cryptic statement from the President: "The armed forces must concentrate all its efforts on its original task," he said. "They must not meddle in politics. The disengagement talks are a political matter. Whether they reach agreement or not is nothing to you. You must mind your own business and attend to that." Which, in the code we had all become expert at deciphering, was Sadat's way of responding to some rumor, gossip or intelligence about someone at the meeting. But who was this person or group he suspected of mixing in politics, whose challenge he evidently took seriously?

* * *

The "political matter" of the disengagement agreement was finally signed between Egypt and Israel on January 18, 1974. Israeli withdrawal to 30 kilometers (19 miles) east of the canal; limitation on the size and positioning of Egyptian forces in Sinai; between them a buffer zone controlled by the United Nations Emergency Force—all

that is a matter of public record. What was not recorded were the scenes which greeted the Egyptian troops who drove once more into the area the Israelis had occupied on the west bank for three months.

They had plundered everything that could be taken, destroyed everything that could not. They had dismantled the Suez oil refinery and fertilizer factory and shipped them back to Israel. They had dismantled the cranes and harbor machinery at Adabia. They had dismantled every water and petroleum pipeline. They had even taken the sheep and cows of the civilian inhabitants and looted their homes. Some equipment at the harbor and elsewhere too heavy to be moved was blown up. And the canal carrying fresh water to the inhabitants of Suez was blocked along a five-mile stretch. The enemy bulldozers must have toiled for weeks to push such thousands of tons of earth and sand into the canal. Reports of the devastation reached my desk a few days later. It was all wholly contrary to international law.

I wondered what the Israeli Government meant to achieve by it, for the pillaging and destruction was too widespread, too systematic to be anything but an organized program. Did they think a scorched earth policy would terrify us? Make us recall the Mongol destruction of Baghdad and fear the Israelis as a people capable of similar barbarism? Or did they, in some perverse way, like living in a climate of hatred? But these are private musings, of no official concern. Three weeks after Sadat's cryptic warnings to the Armed Forces Supreme Council, I had been dismissed.

Chapter Nine: Who Was Responsible?

Before the war, we resolved to avoid the lies and exaggerations which had so damaged the Arabs' reputation in previous battles. This time our communiques would tell the truth.

There were, I confess, two exceptions. Our initial communiques embroidering the charge that Israel had attacked first were untrue, though sanctified by long Israeli usage of the same ploy. And none of those photographs of our crossing were genuine. Those men in dinghies while the Egyptian flag flies high on the enemy ramparts ahead of them; the soldier kissing the soil of Sinai; the first tanks streaming over the bridge—all, I regret to say, fake. No photographers, even military ones, were allowed into the crossing zone before October 8. I was one of the instigators of this decision. We expected far bloodier resistance then we met, and we did not need the complication of photographers. But I soon regretted it, doubly so when I saw the photographs our public relations department produced. Undisciplined groups, ill-packed equipment, slovenly formations—our

men looked more like a mob than an army. I was ashamed of the photographs.

But the communiques remained truthful, at least until our tank losses of October 14. After that their veracity declined until, with the enemy penetration at Deversoir, they succumbed to straightforward lying. First ignoring the penetration, then denying it, finally when it was impossible to keep the secret any longer, peddling the fantasy of seven tanks in the bushes.

Ismail was putting out this nonsense. I heard him do it. On the afternoon of October 18, when the enemy force on the west bank amounted to four armored brigades with a fifth imminent, I heard him talking on the phone to the Deputy Prime Minister, Dr. Abdel Khader Hatem, who was also Information Minister. "The enemy have only seven tanks west of the canal," Ismail was saying. "They are following guerrilla tactics. Hit and run. They escape into the thickets there. That is why it is proving a bit difficult to find and destroy them." I could not hear Hatem's end of the converstaion, but it was clear he did not believe the story. Ismail had to repeat it, with elaboration, several times.

I tackled Ismail about this. We had diametrically opposing views. Bad news might affect morale, Ismail said, not just in the armed forces but throughout Egypt and the Arab world. I said bad news would serve as a spur to every soldier and civilian to give of his best. With memories of arguing over my withdrawal of the anti-tank guided weapon battalions, I said it might make those not directly involved in the west bank fighting readier to help those who were. It was useless. Ismail was clearly working with the President. Our media continued to write lies to the end of the war.

And after. On October 30, when the plight of Third Army was desperate, the Egyptian newspapers appeared with banner headlines: "Our forces are in complete control of the West Bank of the Canal between Deversoir and Suez Town" and: "The Third Army is Receiving Supplies in the Normal Fashion." The whole world was being told of the encirclement of Third Army—except the wives, mothers, sisters and sweethearts of the men suffering out there. Of course, rumors began to circulate. It was a catastrophe too big to hide. And people in Egypt have learned to trust rumor over their Press. But the authorities persistently denied the truth. The President even denied it in front of the People's Assembly. (In his memoirs, Sadat continues to blur the point.)

At 1700 hours on December 5, I gave an interview to Arnaud de Borchgrave of *Newsweek* magazine. (It had been arranged through the usual channels.) I revealed no military secrets but I spoke freely. As a rule, a copy of any interview must be submitted to our censorship bureau. Next day Ismail summoned me. An Arabic translation was on his desk. He asked if I had said all that. I said yes. He said I should not have. I should have cleared the substance with Defense Intelligence beforehand.

"How could I possibly ask the Intelligence Service?" I said. "They are my subordinates. I know what needs to be secret far better than the Director of Intelligence. I have a wider perspective and a deeper knowledge. Anyway, why should we hide things which everybody in the world knows except our own citizens?"

Ismail himself had just given a markedly indiscreet interview to Hassanein Heikal, the Editor-in-Chief of *Al Ahram*. So I added: "Some things, our losses and our

reinforcements since the war, are not known to the world so I declined questions about those. But you felt able to tell Heikal our losses and he promptly published them. If the enemy can discover our reinforcements since October 6, and they probably can, they can work out our present strength."

The discussion which followed was outspoken. Ismail told me to call de Borchgrave and withdraw the interview. I refused on principle.

Five days later, on the morning of December 11, I picked up my copy of *Al Ahram*. Big headlines: "Our Troops East and West of the Canal Have Advanced Ten Kilometers." It was attributed to United Nations Emergency Force headquarters in Cairo. It was total fabrication. Nothing of the sort had happened. Furious, I started to track down the source. Our liaison officer with the Emergency Force reported that the United Nations had issued no such information. Defense Intelligence also denied knowledge. That left only two sources: the Editor-in-Chief of *Al Ahram* and General Ahmed Ismail.

Ismail, when I went to see him, also denied knowledge —to my mind, uneasily. I lost my temper. "Somebody must be punished for this," I shouted. "This is madness. It is untrue. It is damaging. It is telling lies to the nation and making us a laughing stock internationally. We must find the culprit and punish him."

"By what right are you so angry?" Ismail said. "Are you the minister responsible for information? They might consider this in the best interest of the country."

"They," I asked. "Who do you mean by they?"

"I do not know," Ismail insisted. "But I must tell you that you have no right to interfere in either the Intelligence Service or the Information Service."

I replied that as Chief of Staff I would interfere in anything affecting the armed forces. Then, my suspicions thoroughly aroused by Ismail, I went off to tackle the Information Minister. Shortly before 1300 hours I was in Hatem's office. I favored him with my views on our information policy in general and this incident in particular, and I wound up: "There are two people I have no authority to question. One is the War Minister, General Ahmed Ismail; the other is Hassanein Heikal, the Editor-in-Chief of *Al Ahram*. I call on you to discover the facts."

My fury was such that next morning, December 12, *Al Ahram* printed a correction and some lame excuse. But what is now clear is that Sadat himself was the ultimate source of the story. He even repeats it in his memoirs: "In December 1973 I was ready to liquidate the enemy's Deversoir pocket. Our forces started a war of attrition. . . . We regained a good deal of ground every day—sometimes advancing a few yards, sometimes a few miles, but always advancing. . . ." Total lies. But it explains the events which followed.

Since October 1, I had been home once, for that hot bath and change of clothes in the lull on October 7. By the middle of November things had calmed down. I was not continuously needed with the troops or at GHQ. I had even had time to resume my daily exercises—I had lost almost 14 pounds in six weeks. But how could I relax while the 45,000 officers and men of Third Army were cut off? I made a private vow not to go home until our lines to them had been re-established.

But December 13 was my wedding anniversary and I had persuaded myself I might spend one night at home. I told myself a hot bath, and a deep sleep without the noise from patrolling guards would do me good after 73 days

of fairly primitive existence. So at 1700 hours on December 12, I went home. On an impulse, perturbed by the undercurrents swirling that day, I took from the desk drawer my private diary, in which I habitually kept notes of every important event, and I took from my safe the most important of my papers. I stuffed them in my briefcase and left.

At about 2000 hours, my dream of a quiet evening was shattered. The phone rang. It was Ismail. He said he was at his office at the War Ministry and would like to see me. I said it was my first evening at home for weeks; I had changed into slacks; if it was not urgent I would prefer tomorrow. Ismail was friendly but pressing. I could come in civilian clothes, but it was important. I changed and within half-an-hour walked into his office. I found Gamassy and Mamoun there, attentive as if Ismail were issuing instructions. As I entered all talking ceased. Ismail asked the other two to leave us. Then he embarked on a rambling monologue, but slowly wound to his point:

Ismail: "The President has decided to end your service in the armed forces. He has signed a decree appointing you an ambassador in the foreign service. You are to present yourself in the foreign ministry from eight o'clock tomorrow morning."

Shazly: "I thank the President for his offer. But please convey to him that I could not accept an ambassadorship. I perfer to stay at home."

Ismail: "Does that mean you refuse the order of the President to report to the foreign office?"

Shazly: "Look, General, you put it how you want. If the President is doing me a favor I have the right to accept it or not. If he is doing it as punishment I reject that

too, and request to be court-martialled so that all the facts can be brought out."

Ismail: "What you say is extremely serious. Shall I inform the President of this?"

Shazly: "The telephone is at your side. You can call him at once."

After that Ismail changed tack and tried to convince me it was unwise to reject a presidential decree like this.

Shazly: "What will the President do if I refuse? Court-martial me? So be it. I don't care. I am ready for anything." As I left I repeated I would not go to the foreign office.

I went home to tell my wife. "I am glad they have taken the step" I said. "I have been unhappy at the way things were going for so long, but I could never have resigned at such a difficult time." My wife, characteristically courageous, supported my decision and, with her usual fortitude, restored my sense of perspective: "Thanks be to God you are leaving the armed forces after they have crossed the canal while you were their Chief of Staff. Thanks be to God you are leaving while both of us are in good health. After all your travels, let us enjoy the rest of our life together. I swear if I add up the time you have spent at home since we married it would not amount to a quarter." We laughed—and began to celebrate our first wedding anniversary in civilian life after more than 33 years in the armed forces.

But the evening was not over. That morning de Borchgrave had asked to see me to express his thanks for the interview, even though our censorship had not let him dispatch it. I had said he could come to my home that evening. I got back from Ismail barely 15 minutes before de Borchgrave arrived with his wife. I told him my news

and laughed at his shocked expression. "But you are lucky," I said. "You are the first journalist in the world to know." They stayed for two hours and we had such a pleasant time, and my wife and I were so cheerful, that de Borchgrave clearly suspected some leg-pull. Then, of course, when I assured him it was true, he worried that his copy had been the cause. Well, it was probably one cause, but only one. I didn't want him to feel guilty. So I reassured him it had nothing to do with the case. When he and his wife left about 11:00 P.M., though, de Borchgrave was still worried.

Fifteen minutes later, as I was at last preparing for bed, the telephone rang again. Mubarak on the line. He wanted to see me on "an important matter." I did not know whether he knew of my dismissal, so I tried to put him off. But he pressed me until I felt obliged to reveal my news. "Oh, I know," Mubarak said. "That's why I want to see you. I have a message for you from the President."

"In that case welcome," I said wearily. "I will wait up."

He arrived about 11:30. "The President is most appreciative of your services to the armed forces in peace and war," he said. "But the bad relations, continuous quarrelling, between you and the Minister are too dangerous to continue. Your appointment as an ambassador is in no sense intended as a demotion. You will go with the rank and salary of a minister. The President proposes to send you to London, which as you know is the most coveted posting in the service. As a final demonstration of his appreciation, the President is promoting you to four-star general *(farik awal)* forthwith. He hopes you will accept the job."

"It would have been better," I said, "if the President

had called me to tell me what you have just said. To let Ahmed Ismail tell me, when the President has always known quite well the relations between us, can only mean that the President accepts General Ismail's position. For that reason I could not and cannot accept the offer. I prefer to stay at home." And I repeated what I had told Ismail: if it was a reward, I was free to reject it; if it was a punishment, I wanted it openly done.

It was after midnight when Mubarak left. Even then he had not told me everything. I learned from the newspaper headlines the next day, December 13, that the Commanders of the Second and Third Armies, General Wasel and General Khalil, had also been fired. (Mamoun, whom Khalil had replaced, was fired a little later.) The other two had been offered civilian governorships with the rank of deputy minister. The scapegoats had been found.

The comic part was that the President did not have the nerve to announce it. The papers next morning, December 13, carried the news that General Gamassy had been appointed Chief of Staff. Not a word about what had happened to me. The comedy ripened. In due time a presidential decree posting me to London was signed. The papers dutifully announced my appointment. And all the while I was sitting at home, going nowhere near the foreign office. (I had been back to my office to pick up my belongings on December 14. My files had been rifled.) As the New Year arrived, I decided it was time to tell the President to his face that I did not want the job. I was summoned to meet him at Aswan on January 6, 1974.

I met the President in the garden of his winter resort. He was all affability, asking after my family, our health

and so on. I thanked him for his interest; everything was fine, thanks be to God.

"No, no, things are not fine," he suddenly said. "I am disappointed. How could you behave like this? Are you mad? I send Husny Mubarak to you and you reject my message."

"Mr. President," I said. "I am not disgruntled at leaving the armed forces. Every soldier has to make room for others. What wounded me was the way in which my services were terminated and in which I was told of the decision. When you appointed Ismail as Minister of War I reminded you of my relationship with him."

"That is just why I decided you had to go," Sadat said. "I have no time to investigate who is right and who is wrong. I do not want to get involved. You know why I relieved Mahmoud Fawzy as Prime Minister and took the added responsibility myself? He was complaining that some ministers were not carrying out his orders. I can't waste my time adjudicating between my senior officials. Either you or Ismail had to go and I decided it would be better if you left. So I offered you one of the best posts we have. When Ahmed Ismail told me of your rejection of the offer, I thought he was exaggerating or that you were perhaps unwilling to listen to anything coming from him. So I sent Husny Mubarak and still you rejected the offer. I even considered sending for you myself but Husny advised me not to do it." He laughed suddenly: "I think he was scared of you. How do you manage to frighten your subordinates so much?"

He went on to express his admiration for what I had achieved in the armed forces and especially in the crossing and he assured me of his continued confidence. "I am not sending you to London just for prestige. We are

opening contacts with Germany to get new weapons. I want you to deal with all that. Our present Ambassador in Bonn, Mohammed Ibrahim Kamel, knows nothing about military matters. I know. He was in the same prison as I was."

On that basis, I replied, I was prepared to accept the job. We settled down to discuss particular aspects of our relations with Britain. It was almost 1:30 P.M. when I left. I went down to the Old Cataract Hotel for lunch and to wait for the afternoon flight to Cairo. The inquisitive Hassanein Heikal of *Al Ahram* was there and buttonholed me. I told him what had passed—omitting reference to European arms purchases.

* * *

Those who like happy endings should stop reading at this point. The truth is, the warm glow of Aswan lasted barely a month.

Strange rumors began to circulate—friends in Intelligence kept me informed—that I was going to London to die. After a certain amount of international publicity, the Israelis seemed to have picked upon me as the author of their misfortunes. In London, it was now rumored, I would be an easy target for Zionist or Israeli extremists. And that was the idea.

I paid no heed to the rumors. After a fairly full and adventurous life I am a fatalist in these matters. But I was soon driven to conclude that President Sadat did earnestly wish I was a non-person. When he drove to the People's Assembly in February 1974, to pay tribute to the armed forces for their achievements in the war, three people were missing: General Shazly, General Wasel and General Mamoun. The President then distrubuted commemorative medals. We were not named.

I was at home, watching this remarkable performance on TV. My wife was so worked-up she wanted to switch off, but I insisted. It was part of our country's history. As I watched, I suddenly recalled a comment Saad Mamoun had made in my office at GHQ before the war: "If this crossing fails, I can tell you three heads which will roll," he had said. The crossing had been a triumph. The three heads had rolled just the same.

To add to the comedy, President Asad shortly afterwards held a similar thanksgiving ceremony in Damascus at which decorations were awarded to Syrian heroes of the war. The ceremony was broadcast and, like millions of Egyptians, I listened on my radio. I was awarded Syria's highest military decoration. At the mention of my name those at the ceremony applauded for several minutes.

My departure for London had been set for May 13. A few days before I was due to leave I was officially warned by Rifaat Hassanein, the Deputy Director of the National Intelligence Service, that a group of Israeli extremists planned to assassinate me in London. My travel plans should not be announced beforehand, and I should take extreme care. So it was without announcement that I arrived in London on May 13, 1974.

London is an agreeable city, and though I took precautions my life soon settled into a routine. My wife and I had many friends there. The only note of hostility came from Cairo.

I began to receive reports that President Sadat was accusing me, with increasing stridency, of responsibility for the Israeli penetration at Deversoir. Then came an elaboration: I had been a nervous wreck when I got back to the Operations Room on October 19 after my stint

with Second Army. Finally he began saying he had dismissed me on the spot.

I could so easily disprove all of this that I began to worry for my safety. I acquired two Libyan passports in false names for my wife and myself, as a first precaution against assassins of whatever persuasion.

Nothing happened. The final note was again one of comedy. One day, after I had been in London for some months, our defense attaché came to see me. He was so embarrassed he could hardly speak. "General, sir," he finally blurted, "I am sorry to find myself in this position and I hope, sir, you will understand my situation. You have been awarded the Military Star of Honor, and I have been asked by Cairo to deliver the star and the letter of citation to your excellency."

I calmed the young man, said his feeling did him credit, I quite understood—the usual things. I took the small case. The Syrian decoration had arrived six months earlier. Still, I thought as I slipped it into my pocket, better late than never.

Epilogue

I HAVE tried to tell the true story of the October War, giving answers to some of the many questions which have for so long been unanswered—or wrongly answered. This is the first book on that war to give the Egyptian point of view without being censored by Sadat and his autocratic regime.

Some Egyptians may ask: has General Shazly revealed military secrets? (And they may be encouraged to ask this by their state-controlled media.) If by "secret" we mean information useful to the enemy and detrimental to our own national security, the answer is clearly no. Any democratic society should be able to tolerate all that is written in these pages. If Egypt today cannot tolerate what I say in my book, the fault lies with her rulers and not with me.

For the last six years Sadat has tried to hide some of the facts and to destroy others in order to cover up the blunders committed during the war or to shuffle the blame on to others. I have written these memoirs to set

the record straight. Their authenticity cannot be questioned since I have documents verifying what I have said.

What I have written in particular about the Battle of Deversoir is something well known to the Israelis but which, sadly, has never been officially told to the Egyptian people themselves.

I believe that we could have done much better than we did during the war if Sadat had not so frequently interfered in military decisions. Egypt's soldiers and Egypt's commanders were of a high standard and they fought well. They were let down by their political leaders.

APPENDIX

Comments on Sadat's Conferences

October 1970–May 1971. During this period the President was without real power and, therefore, repeated the slogans he inherited from Nasser, such as: "What is taken by force could not be retaken by force." He could not challenge the Supreme Executive Committee and call for anything but war; yet in fact, he was playing a double role. He was trying to convince the Egyptian people and the Soviet Union that he was prepared and willing to go to war, while at the same time secretly trying to convince the Americans that he really wanted peace. He is a typical Machivellian ruler. Grasping this fact will make it easier to compare what he says with what he does.

March 23, 1971. The object of the conference was to convince us that he will never negotiate with the enemy. That the enemy is intransigent and will never withdraw troops from Sinai and the other occupied Arab territories unless forced. He distributed the map showing the Israeli demands in order to show us the impossibility of negotiating with them.

June 3, 1971. He was seeking support of the armed forces. He was trying to convince the senior commanders that his action against his political opponents on May 15 (in fact, his coup) was within his constitutional rights. It was not, as we know now. The majority vote in the Supreme Executive Committee was against him. The

reason he gave for arresting them was that they were trying to impose trusteeship on him, which they had never done with Nasser.

November 4, November 19, 1971. He was trying to convince the Egyptians and the Soviets that he really wanted war—that all his moves toward peace were just to gain time.

January 2, 1972. He wanted to save face after all the propaganda that he was going to war before the end of 1971. He put all the blame on the Soviet Union—for Sadat there is always someone to blame.

June 6, 1972. He acknowledged the report prepared by General Ismail, Director of the National Intelligence Service, that Egypt was not ready to go to war, and declared that he and his War Minister, General Sadek, are of the same opinion. Nevertheless, he dismissed Sadek four months later, accusing him of not wanting to go to war. Between Sadat's conference of June 6, 1972, and the dismissal of Sadek on October 26, 1972, not a single rifle had been added to the weapons we had.

FOOTNOTES

1 Discovering by chance that the Swedish Chief of Staff was on a private visit to Egypt, I gave him lunch at our Officers' Club on June 26, 1972. Our talk was military; but when I asked for clarification of his mobilization system he pleaded Sweden's strict neutrality and, apologizing, I dropped the subject. Back home he must have realized how much was already published. On August 4 he sent me a letter, enclosing articles on the system, and inviting two officers to spend a fortnight studying it. I chose the pair by competition, told them what I needed to find out, and on October 14, both very excited, they were on their way to Stockholm. Their subsequent report convinced me that within nine years Egypt can have one of the best mobilization systems in the world. I am grateful to the Swedes.

2 Some of the most important experiments and their dates:

a) Opening passages in the sand barrier, building bridges and operating ferries of different types by day and night (1971, 1972, 1973).

b) The effect of the burning oil slick on the assault infantry (1971, 1972).

c) Infantry battalion crossing a water barrier in boats and climbing the sand barrier while carrying all its portable weapons (1971, 1972, 1973).

d) The effectiveness of medium artillery and 240mm mortars on concrete fortifications similar to the Bar-Lev line (1971, 1972, 1973).

e) The effectiveness and accuracy of the Al Kahir and Al Zafir missiles (1971, 1972).

f) Amphibious battalion and brigade crossing a wide water barrier (1972, 1973).

g) The use of infrared and starlight scopes and xenon searchlights (1972, 1973).

h) The use of lasers as rangefinders (1973, only a few months before war. We could not introduce them into our tanks in time).

i) The TU-16 bomber firing stand-off, air-to-surface missiles at a range of 60 miles (May 1973).

3 Egypt never had the final say in the quality and the quantity of weapons received from the Soviet Union. The list of weapons agreed upon between both countries was always subject to negotiation. Four main factors were taken into consideration: (1) Soviet readiness to supply the weapons; (2) Egypt's financial capability to pay for the weapons; (3) Soviet readiness to supply Egypt with loans to finance the deal; Egypt's capability to absorb these weapons.

The October 1971 deal, although our biggest to that date, was just a compromise. It could never be considered adequate to meet the requirements of Operation 41; it fell too short for that. Nevertheless, it was a good step forward.

4 It is doubtful that Brezhnev would have asked Sadek about the Egyptian leadership eliminating all who might be thought anti-Soviet. Certainly Brezhnev knew that Sadek was the leading antagonist against the Soviet Union in Egypt. However, when writing these memoirs, it was my duty to write what had been said, whether or not it was logical.

5 Essentially, each division got two bridges: either two TPP or one PMP. Normally, construction of a TPP bridge would take 6–8 hours, while construction of a PMP would take 3–4 hours. This would mean the saving of four precious hours by the latter, assuming there was no sand barrier. In our case, however, the bulk of work to construct the bridges fell within the period during which our engineers were busy opening 70 breaches, through which the bridges as well as the ferries were to operate. As a result, the TPP bridge was ready to operate only two hours after the breach was opened, while the PMP bridge was ready to operate only one hour after the breach was opened. The real saving, therefore, was reduced to only one hour; yet we must consider this one hour still as an enormous advantage. Moreover, PMP bridges have double the crossing capacity of the TPP.

6 It was late afternoon when I returned from the front. I met the Minister of War and told him about my idea for building a solid bridge in the canal causeway. But he was very reluctant and told me that he must get the President's permission. After I left General Ismail, I decided to study the project with the appropriate personnel. I first discussed the matter with the director of the engineers,

General Gamal Ali, and he suggested that I should also seek the advice and help of the following: Engineer Osman A. Osman Ahmad, the director of the Arab contractors company which had built the high dam; Dr. Badran, the minister responsible for agricultural reform; and Engineer Mashour Ahmad Mashour, the head of the Suez Canal Company.

At about 2100 hours, they all assembled at Center Ten, where I briefed them about what I wanted and asked their advice. Osman was the most enthusiastic about the project. He shook my hand and said, "I congratulate you on this idea. I myself was thinking of suggesting this idea to the armed forces." As for the time required, Osman said, he could not give an answer before making calculations.

On the other hand, Mashour was shocked. "How can you suggest this idea," he said, "when the President instructed me today to prepare a plan for the quick resumption of navigation through the canal?" I answered that we were not going to start before getting the President's permission, and that General Ismail would inform him of the situation and ask his permission.

The group left my office at about 2300 hours after agreeing that Osman would be responsible for the project, while the others would give him all possible support.

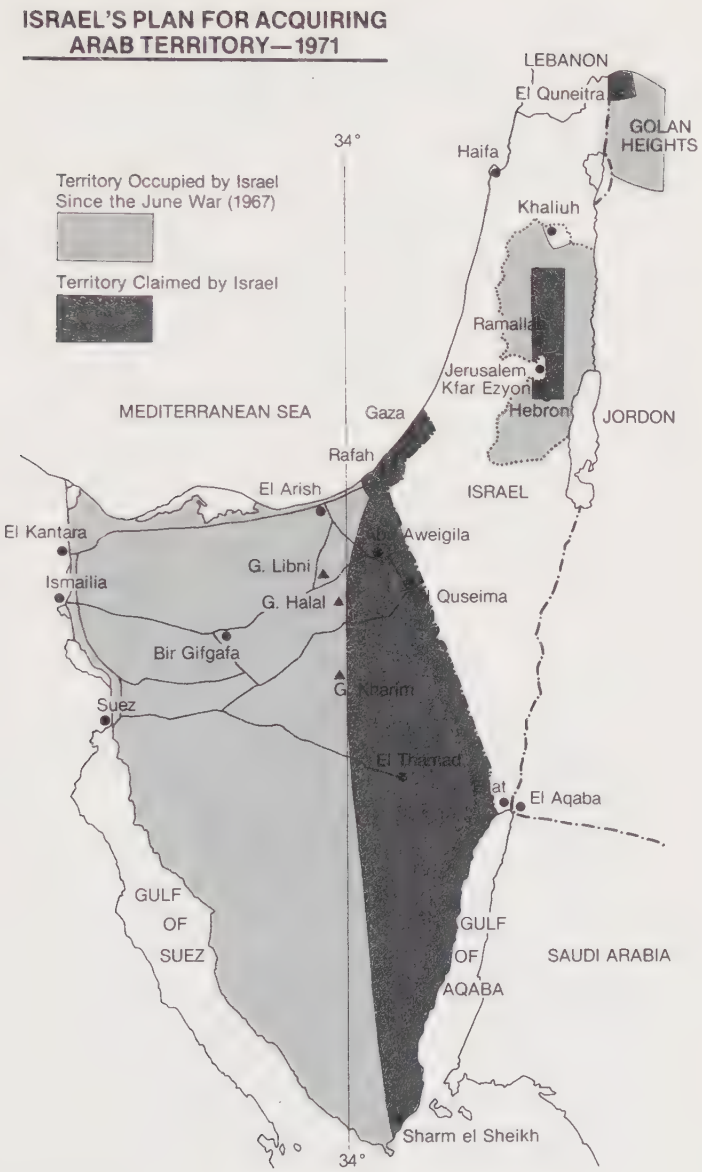
The feasibility study was presented to me on the night of October 9. It stated that in the Third Army sector it would be costly to make such a project because of the swift current in this sector. The Deversoir, Verdan, and Kantara sectors were the most suitable. They would need a week of preparation to bring the equipment and materials to the work areas, and another nine days to finish the job. There was one condition: Soman stipulated that we should contact the Libyan authorities so that he could withdraw his bulldozers, and other engineering equipment, which were already engaged in Libyan projects.

Once more, I went to General Ismail and pressed him to get the President's permission. Finally, I was informed of the President's approval in the late afternoon of October 10 and I immediately informed all those concerned. According to the feasibility study, the work would start on October 18 and finish on the 27th.

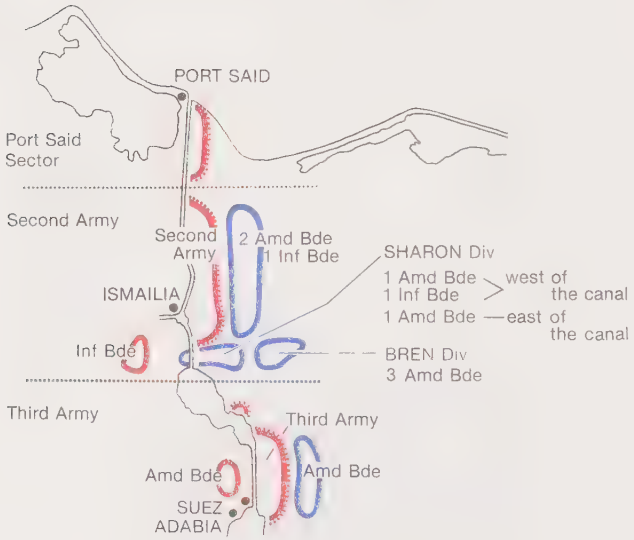
The enemy penetration in the Deversoir sector forced us to drop our plans to build a permanent bridge there. After so many delays

and so many unexpected problems, a bridge was completed at Verdan on December 1 and another at Kantara on December 9.

Strangely enough, the enemy adopted the same idea and built a similar bridge at the very point where we were planning to build one in the Deversoir sector. This was the best place for it because the speed of the current there is minimal. That is why the enemy bridge became operational towards the end of November 1973.


ISRAEL'S PLAN FOR ACQUIRING ARAB TERRITORY—1971
Territory Occupied by Israel Since the June War (1967)
Territory Claimed by Israel
LEBANON
El Quneitra
GOLAN HEIGHTS
34°
Haifa
Khaliuh
Ramallah
Jerusalem
Kfar Ezyon
Hebron
JORDON
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
Gaza
Rafah
ISRAEL
El Arish
El Kantara
Aweigila
G. Libni
Ismailia
G. Halal
Quseima
Bir Gifgafa
G. Kharim
Suez
El Thamad
Eilat
El Aqaba
GULF OF SUEZ
GULF OF AQABA
SAUDI ARABIA
Sharm el Sheikh
34°

DISPOSITION OF TROOPS
during the night of **OCTOBER 16 1973**



Bridgehead Troops (East of the Canal)

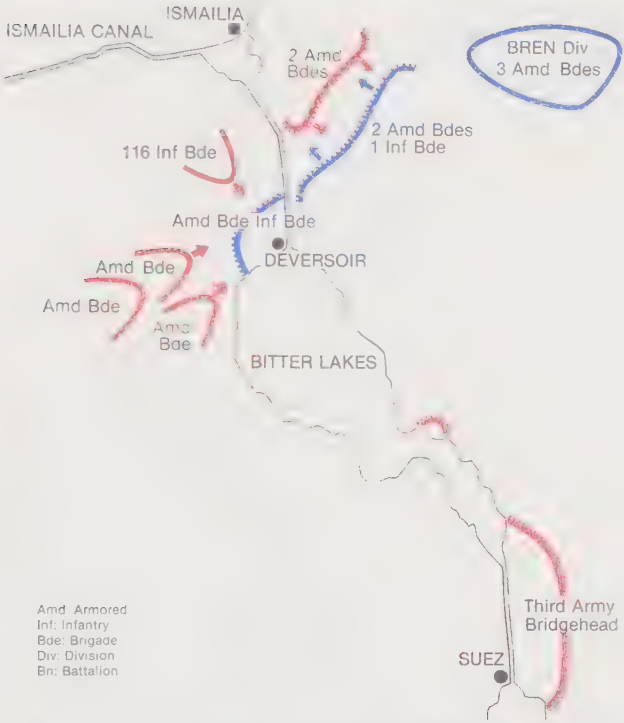
Units	2d Army	3d Army	Total
Infantry Brigade	10	9	19
Armored Brigade	4	3	7
Tank Battalion	12	10	22
BMP Battalion	3	2	5
ATGW Battalion	4	3	7
ATK Battalion	3	2	5

Enemy deployment

Area of Operation	East		West		Total	
	Amd Bde	Inf Bde	Amd Bde	Inf Bde	Amd Bde	Inf Bde
Deversoir	4		1	1	5	1
Second Army	2	1			2	1
Third Army	1				1	
Total	7	1	1	1	8	2

Amd: Armored
Inf Infantry
Bde Brigade
Div Division

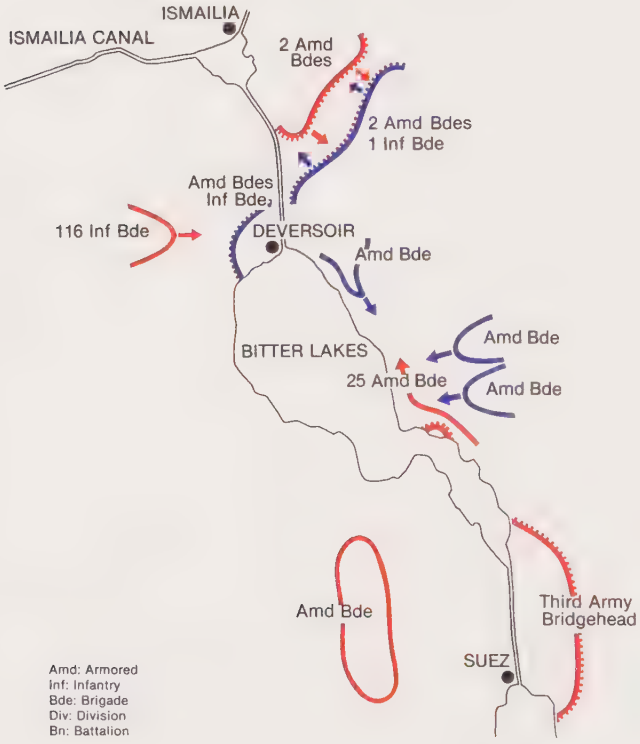
BATTLE OF DEVERSOIR as GENERAL SHA[illegible] wanted it to be



Battle Area	Egypt			Israel		Ratio in Tanks
	Inf Bde	Amd Bde	Tank Bn	Inf Bde	Amd Bde	
Deversoir	2	5	1	2	3	[illegible] : 1
Second Army Bridgehead	10	2	12	—	1	[illegible] : 1
Third Army Bridgehead	8	1	10	—	1	[illegible] : 1
Operational Reserve					3	
Total	20	8	23	2	8	[illegible] : 1

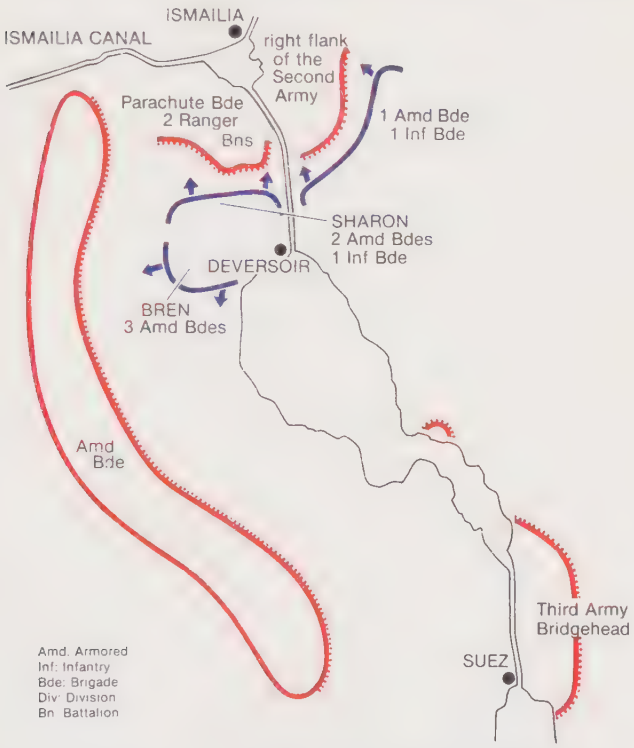
- If the enemy choses to direct reserves (BREN Div) against the Second Army, they chould be easily repelled with a ratio of 1.5:1 in tanks in our favor and with a ratio of more than 3:1 if we include our ATK weapons.
- The enemy could not commit reserves to the west bank due to the lack of bridges and our destructive artillery fire on the crossing sites.
- We would be superior on the west bank with a ratio of 3:1.

BATTLE OF DEVERSOIR OCTOBER 17 1973



Battle Area	Egypt			Israel		Ratio in Tanks
	Inf Bde	Amd Bde	Tank Bn	Inf Bde	Amd Bde	
Deversoir	1	3	1	2	6	1 : 2
Second Army Bridgehead	10	2	12	—	1	6 : 1
Third Army Bridgehead	9	2	10	—	1	5 : 1
Operational Reserve	—	1				
Total	20	8	23	2	8	2 : 1

DISPOSITION OF TROOPS at 1700 hrs on OCTOBER 18 1973



Battle Area	Egypt			Israel		Ratio in Tanks
	Inf Bde	Amd Bde	Tank Bn	Inf Bde	Amd Bde	
Deversoir (West)	1	—	—	1	5	1 : 5
Second Army	10	4	12	1	2	4 : 1
Third Army	9	2	10	—	1	5 . 1
Operational Reserve	—	1	—			
Total	20	7	22	2	8	2 : 1

- 25th Amd Bde destroyed Oct 17. 23d Amd
- Bde destroyed Oct 18. Presidential Amd Bde in Cairo, leaving 7 amd bdes in the battle area.

DISPOSITION OF TROOPS

at 1900 hrs on **OCTOBER 22 1973**

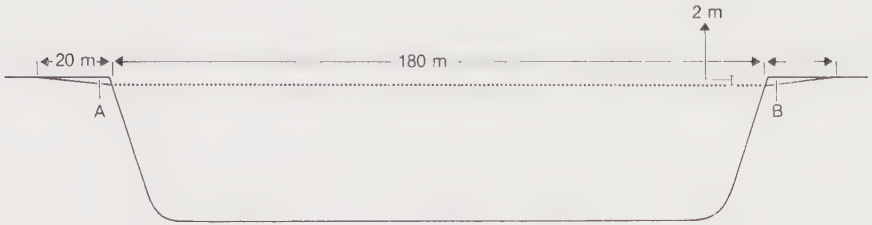
Battle Area	Egypt			Israel		Ratio in tanks
	Inf Bde	Amd Bde	Tank Bn	Inf Bde	Amd Bde	
Deversoir	2	2		2	6	: 3
Second Army	10	4	12	2	2	:
Third Army	8	1	10	2	1	: 1
Total	20	7	22	6	9	: 1

DISPOSITION OF TROOPS

at 0800 hrs **OCTOBER 25 1973**

Battle Area	Egypt			Israel		Ratio in tanks
	Inf Bde	Amd Bde	Tk Bn	Inf Bde	Amd Bde	
Israeli Bulge	2	2		3	6	:
Second Army	10	4	12	2	2	:
Third Army	8	1	10	2	1	:
Total	20	7	22	7	9	:

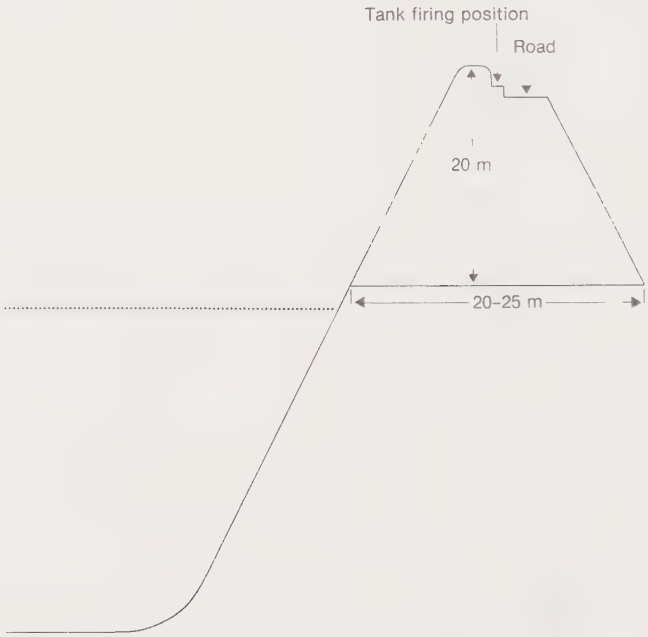
CROSS SECTION OF THE SUEZ CANAL



- The shoulders of the banks of the Canal (A & B) are built of rocks and cement.
- These shoulders, had to be knocked down before any amphibious tank or vehicle could cross the Canal or before any floating bridge could become operational.

THE ISRAELI SAND BARRIER

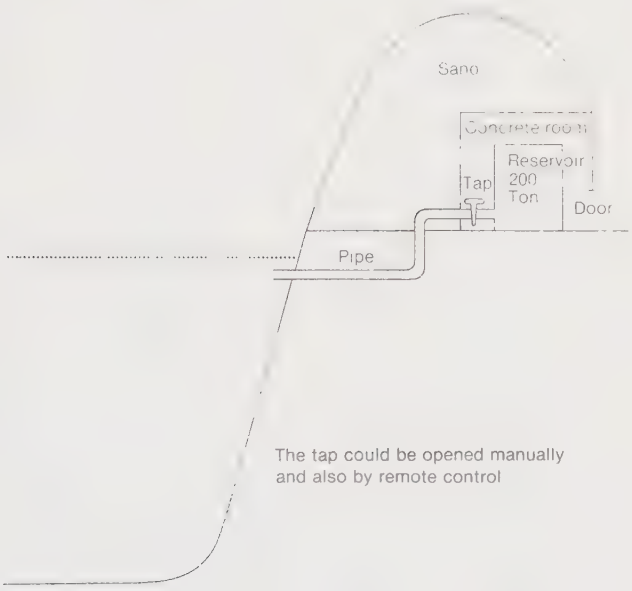
on the east side of the Suez Canal on **OCTOBER 6 1973**



- The Sand barrier is 20–25 meters at base and about 20 m high.
- A road was built at the top of the sand barier which permits tanks to move and maneuver unnoticed from our side. Along this road firing positions for tanks were prepared at the rate of 10 in each kilometer.

THE INFLAMMABLE LIQUID

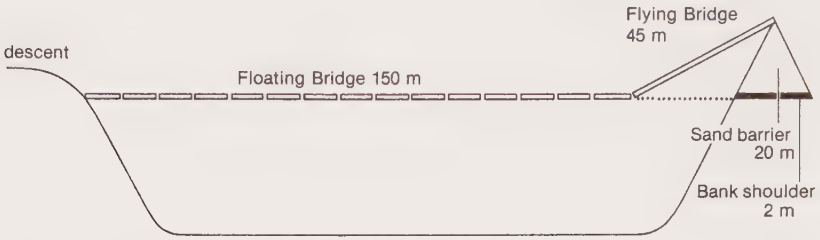
Cross Section of the Suez Canal

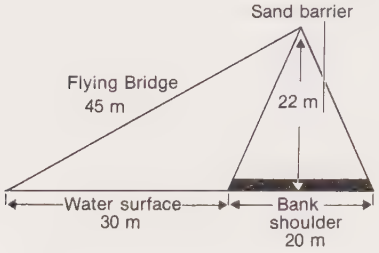


The tap could be opened manually
and also by remote control

(not to scale)

MARAWAN BRIDGE





The angle of ascent is over 31 degrees

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